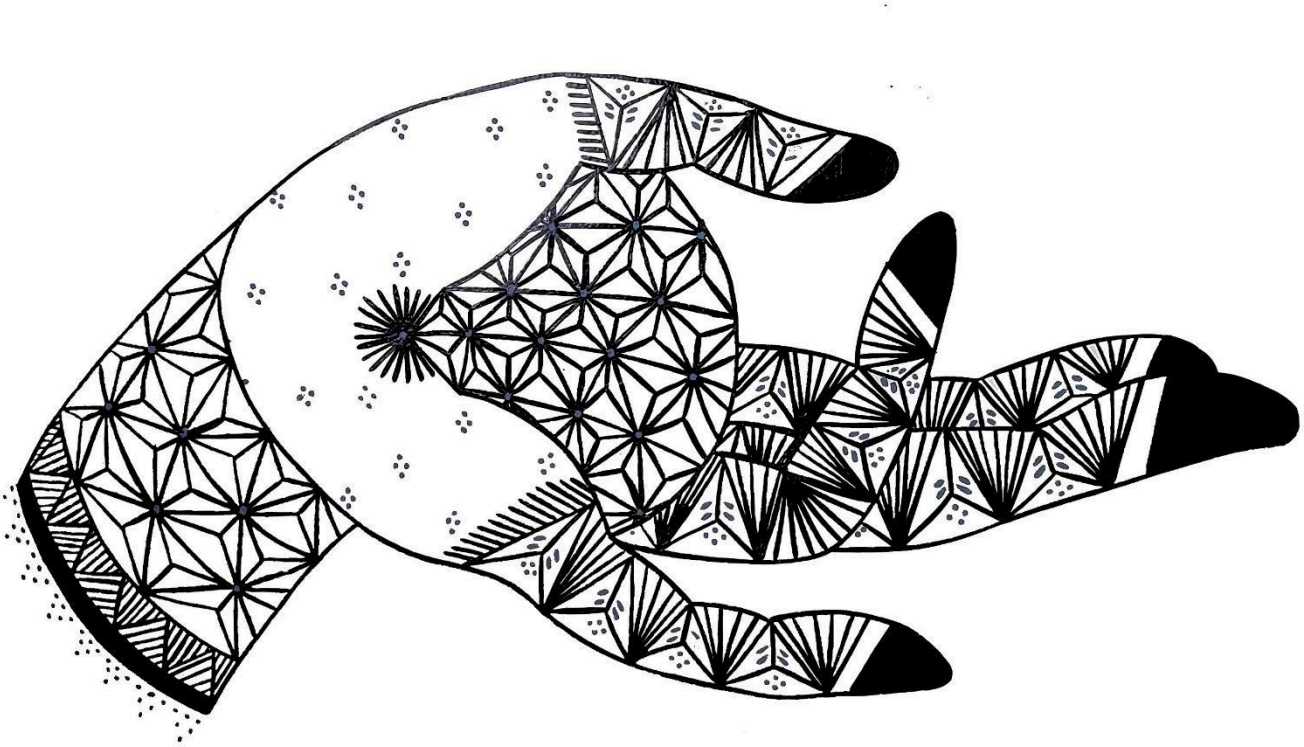
Hungry Ghost Retreats / Aging as Spiritual Practice

The Heart of Forgiveness Workbook

A Work in Progress



Vince Cullen
June 2024

For clarity and the avoidance of doubt:

What's the difference between the Fifth Precept fellowship and Hungry Ghost retreats?

Fifth Precept Sangha (Fellowship): is a peer-led mutual-help organisation that uses Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices to help people wake up to this life. For some, this manifests as a wholehearted recovery from the suffering caused by addictive behaviours and compulsions. This approach encourages individual commitment to living life in harmony – as best we can - with the **Five Universal Precepts,** which can include total abstinence from intoxicants – www.5th-precept.org

Hungry Ghost Retreats: these workshops and retreats are an opportunity to explore and cultivate some of the principles and practices of the Fifth Precept Sangha's approach to waking up to this life (i.e. recovering from life's difficulties) and embracing the realities of the way things are; not how we would like them to be. Thus, we might realise the possibilities and potentiality of a life without alcohol, drugs and other compulsions, making the dreams you didn't know you had come true - all within a retreat setting – www.HungryGhostRetreats.org

'The Forgiveness Workbook' is a work in progress by Vince Cullen.

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The Forgiveness Workbook *is intended primarily as a resource for the Fifth Precept Sangha. (see www.5th-Precept.org) and as a hand-out at 'Hungry Ghost', in person and online, workshop-retreats (see www.HungryGhostRetreats.org).*

The workbook has been updated for use as a learning and practice resource for Pacifica Graduate Institute's Certificate Program:
Aging as Spiritual Practice: A Rite of Passage for Stepping into the Elder Archetype

The latest version of ***The Forgiveness Workbook*** *can be freely downloaded from:*
www.hungryghostretreats.org/The-Heart-of-Forgiveness-Workbook-Vince-Cullen.pdf

The version that you are now reading is dated 04 June 2026 (v11)

Should you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to
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"There are those who do not realise that one day we all must die.
But those who do realise this settle their quarrels."

Buddha

"How do we love our enemies?
First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive.
He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

How You Might Use This Workbook

I offer the contents of this workbook in many different educational programmes and learning environments, for example, during five-day residential 'Hungry Ghost' workshops and retreats, six-week online Heart of Forgiveness programmes, or through single-session events.

The following are suggested ways to maximise the benefits of using this workbook regardless of whether your interaction with this material is teacher-led, peer or group-based, or as individual self-study.

(1) Read the workbook up to and including the chapter on The Five Great Gifts, then work through each 'gift' and the suggested 'self-study' exercises.

(2) Forgiveness can be seen not as a single event but as an ongoing process - an attitude to be cultivated and developed. From this perspective, after exploring each 'gift', you may find it helpful to practice forgiveness through the lens of that 'gift' for some time, maybe a day, a week or more, before moving on to the following universal precept.

(3) Suppose you intend to practice Forgiveness Bhavana (i.e. forgiveness meditation). In that case, it might be helpful to identify some personal examples of actual hurt and harm that has manifested in your life using the worksheets at the end of each 'gift' but being mindful of the need to build the forgiveness 'muscle'. Therefore, we should start this practice by recalling minor offences and abuses before moving on to the more troubling hurts.

(4) To cultivate personal remorse and practice forgiveness, set aside an appropriate amount of time to work your way through the Three Paths to Forgiveness. Repeat as necessary.

Of course, you could read the whole workbook, cover to cover, and then return - if you want to - to any material of particular interest. It is up to you.

Introduction - What Have You Got To Lose?

This workbook was initially intended for '**Hungry Ghost Retreat**' residential workshops as an introduction and guide to the cultivation, or the bhāvana [1], of Forgiveness. Interestingly, but not explored here, it has been suggested that these exercises could also be expanded to form the basis of a 'Moral Inventory' in a similar way as is used within 12-step traditions.

A Template for Forgiveness

The meditation practice template at the end of this workbook (First Path, Second Path, and Third Path) have been greatly influenced by teachers such as Gil Frondsal, Jack Kornfield, Ajahn Thanasanti and Christina Feldman, and particularly the teacher and author Jeff Oliver from his book 'Forgiveness for Everyone'.

How to prepare for Forgiveness Bhāvana

This workbook views the process - or the cultivation - of forgiveness ~ Forgiveness Bhāvana ~ through the lens of the ancient and timeless Five Universal Precepts. That is, to see the harm caused when we don't live in harmony with these ethical aspirations:

- Refraining from harming ourselves or others by [our thoughts, our words or] our actions.
- Refraining from taking anything that has not been freely given.
- Refraining from sexual [and sensual] misconduct.
- Refraining from false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander.
- Refraining from taking alcohol and other drugs that lead to the loss of mindfulness[2].

These are five seemingly simple guidelines that, when adopted, actually reduce and remove so much avoidable suffering from our lives and those around us. These five suggestions are humanity's oldest Harm Reduction and Relapse Prevention programme! To live mindfully (*remembering-to-remember*) in harmony with these five suggestions, or these five great gifts as they are sometimes known, is to commit to harmlessness in the service of blamelessness and the natural rewards of freedom from fear, freedom from hostility and freedom from affliction.

When this workbook is part of a **Hungry Ghost Retreat** workshop, I suggest writing one or two examples of past hurts* in each category you would like to bring into this practice.

We might read through the precept pages and then note for each precept how we have hurt others, how we have hurt ourselves, and how others have hurt us*.

***IMPORTANT WARNING**: These should be minor hurts, small offences, and violations to be used as much to practice the practice as to heal those specific hurts. Try not to start with significant hurts from the past; you can build up to those as you cultivate the practice.

As I've said, this is a meditation template; this practice is best broken down and undertaken over several sessions or 'sittings' that may last weeks, months, or even years.

[1] Bhāvanā (Pali; Sanskrit, also bhāvana) literally means "development" or "cultivating" or "producing" in the sense of "calling into existence."

[2] Mindfulness (or Sati) in Buddhist tradition is always ethically inclined and always in the service of reducing suffering.

Finding Peace with Forgiveness

> *"These two are fools. Which two?*
> *The one who doesn't see their transgression as a transgression, and the one who doesn't rightfully pardon another who has confessed their transgression.*
> *These two are fools.*
>
> *"These two are wise. Which two?*
> *The one who sees their transgression as a transgression, and the one who rightfully pardons another who has confessed their transgression.*
> *These two are wise."* [3]

When we wake **up to this life,** we can be immobilised by our sense of guilt and shame about past events. We can also be immobilised by holding on to anger, hatred, ill will, and resentment.

We can close this potential door to yet more suffering through the cultivation of **Forgiveness**.

It can be very positive and beneficial to cultivate **Forgiveness**, particularly in the early stages of 'waking up' or 'recovery'... we are all in 'recovery' from something. We can learn to ask for forgiveness, forgive ourselves and intend to forgive others when the time is right. We can bring forward memories of things that have happened in the past in a wise, skilful way and without re-traumatising ourselves.

Guilt and Remorse

It is essential to know the difference between **Guilt** and **Remorse**. [4]

Guilt is 'unskilful' in Buddhist terms, as it tends to solidify into *"I'm a bad person"* and even *"I'll always be a bad person".*

Remorse, conversely, is a skilful expression of personal regret for a thought, word or act that we feel has caused ourselves or someone else suffering and hurt. Remorse views things in terms of cause and effect *(Karma-Vipaka)* :

"When these causes and conditions arise AND when these choices are taken, these results will follow. There may be suffering for me and others."

[3] "Fools & Wise People" (AN 2.21) translated from the Pali by: Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

[4] Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "*Four Foundations of Mindfulness*" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/

This mindfulness-based remorse does not solidify into negative self-views but acknowledges that we can, and we do change:

> ***"That was who I was,***
> ***Not who I am;***
> ***And not who I will be!***
> ***I am changing, I forgive myself!"***[5]

In the future, if or when similar causes and conditions arise, we can consciously make a different choice to avoid harming anyone, including ourselves.

Regret and Resentment

These are both negative emotions that can stem from past experiences, but they have some key differences:

- **Focus:** Like remorse, regret focuses on your actions (or inaction). You look back on a situation and wish you'd done something differently. Resentment, on the other hand, focuses on the actions of others. You feel bitter or angry because someone wronged you in some way.
- **Self-blame vs. Blame:** Regret often involves self-blame. You replay the situation in your head and think about what you could have done differently. Resentment consists of blaming someone else. You hold onto anger because you feel the other person is responsible for your negative feelings.
- **Looking forward vs. Looking back:** Regret can be a motivator for change. By acknowledging your mistakes, you can learn from them and avoid repeating them in the future. Resentment, like guilt, keeps you stuck in the past. It's difficult to move on when you're constantly dwelling on past negative experiences.

Here's an analogy: Think of regret as a rearview mirror. It helps you see what's been behind you so you can avoid making the same mistakes again. Resentment is like a big rock in your backpack. It weighs you down and makes it difficult to move forward.

Of course, there can be some overlap between the two emotions. For example, you might regret something you did that caused resentment in another person. However, the core distinction is whether you focus on your actions or someone else's.

What does the act of Forgiveness mean?

We can use this healing practice to examine how we have harmed ourselves and others and how others have hurt us, and then we can let it all go.

To paraphrase Jack Kornfield:-

- We have all been harmed or betrayed, just as at other times, we have hurt or betrayed ourselves or others. In undertaking this practice, we set forth the intention to **forgive**, ask for **forgiveness**, and extend **forgiveness** to ourselves.

- **Forgiveness** does not justify or condone harmful actions. While we may **forgive**, we do not have to forget; we may say, ***"Never again will I allow this to happen!"***

- **Forgiveness** does not mean we must seek out and speak to those who have caused us harm.

[5] 'Forgiveness for Everyone' (p.105) by Jeff Oliver

- Sometimes **forgiveness** comes naturally from this practice; sometimes, it can have quite the opposite effect, uncovering the pain, anger and resentment we still carry. In this instance, we offer unconditional friendliness to ourselves.

- **Forgiveness** is an act of the heart. We let go of the burdens of the resentment, ill-will and outrage we have carried for too long.

- The process of **forgiveness** cannot be faked or rushed. In some situations and circumstances, complete **forgiveness** may take many years. This is OK! But in the end, **forgiveness** will come as a relief, as a release of the heart.

- We take small steps into the practice of **forgiveness**. This is a practice that can be done a hundred times. Gradually, step by step, little by little, it will liberate us from the past and open our hearts to the present, letting us move on with our lives.[6]

- Fundamentally, **forgiveness** is for our own sake, a way to no longer carry around the pain of the past. Forgiveness is a gift.

The Generosity of Forgiveness

> *We should forgive one another and wash away that stain from our hearts.*
> *Why?*
> *Because otherwise, it turns into animosity and enmity.*
> *The act of forgiving is called the gift of forgiveness.* [7]

Forgiveness and Long Life

Forgiveness has many benefits, including living with a peaceful mind and even dying with a calm and peaceful mind.

In certain circumstances, one study suggests that when experiencing life-threatening health conditions, those individuals who are unable or unwilling to forgive have a far greater chance of not surviving their illness.

Unforgiveness makes people sick and keeps them sick.

Another study found that, of all cancer patients, 61 per cent had forgiveness issues, and of those, more than half were severe. [8]

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[6] Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "*Four Foundations of Mindfulness*" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/

[7] *Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo - www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html*

[8] *http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/healthscience/2015/June/The-Deadly-Consequences-of-Unforgiveness*

A Prayer of Forgiveness

"If I have harmed anyone in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through my own confusions
I ask for their forgiveness.

If anyone has harmed me in any way
either knowingly or unknowingly
through their own confusions
I forgive them.

And if there is a situation
I am not yet ready to forgive
I forgive myself for that.

For all the ways that I harm myself,
negate, doubt, belittle myself,
judge or be unkind to myself
through my own confusions
I forgive myself."

Through the spirit and practice of forgiveness, we can be freed from the past to live more fully in the present; we can radically change our lives for the better, here and now.

> *Hatred never ends through hatred,*
> *By non-hate alone, does it end.*
> *This is an ancient truth.* [9]

[9] *Dhammapada verse 5 translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita*

THE FIVE GREAT GIFTS

The Five Great Gifts: Common Sense That Is Older Than The Buddha

> *"Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans."* [10]

The Buddha spoke these words in a talk called the **Rewards Sutta** around 2,600 years ago, clearly stating that these suggestions for a peaceful life were already original and long-standing. So, these precepts should not be considered 'Buddhist', but these suggestions should be recognised as universal. As the Buddha says, *"not open to suspicion and irrefutable by intelligent people".*

Ancient Wisdom

Early legal codes addressed common themes as they still do today: violence, property, sexual impropriety, untruthfulness, and intoxication.

The Ur-Nammu Code is one of the earliest known law codes. It was devised in Mesopotamia some 1,500 years (c. 2100 BCE) before the Buddha (c. 600 BCE) and some 800 years before the Ten Commandments (c. 1200 BCE) were established. Studies of the Ur-Nammu Code suggest that the most common crimes or causes of harm and conflict at that time were:

1. ***Homicide****: The Ur-Nammu Code prescribed specific punishments for different types of homicide, such as murder and manslaughter. Also, Bodily Injury: The code addressed crimes involving physical harm, such as assault and battery. It prescribed punishments based on the severity of the injury.*
2. ***Theft and Robbery****: Crimes related to the unlawful taking of property, including theft, robbery, and burglary, were common and punished under the Ur-Nammu Code. Also, debt-related Crimes: Failure to repay debts or fulfil contractual obligations was sometimes considered a criminal offence.*
3. ***Adultery****: Adultery, or sexual relations between a married person and someone other than their spouse, was considered a crime and punished accordingly.*
4. ***Perjury and False Testimony****: Providing false testimony or evidence in legal proceedings was punishable under the Ur-Nammu Code.*

The Hammurabi Code, implemented about 300 years later (c. 1750 BCE), included all of the above plus:

5. ***Public Order and Social Crimes****, such as Disorderly conduct and public disturbance.*

These crime categories are still used in crime statistics throughout the world today. So, you can see that the Buddha didn't just make up his five training 'Precepts' as a moral code; these codes and the ancient and traditional 'precepts' promote Social Order.

These early legal codes were intended to establish a legal framework for preventing disputes and conflicts, but the Buddha's five suggestions for living fearlessly and harmlessly are not a legal code or religious obligation or ethical expectation; they are personal unconditional 'gifts' - not looking for reward - but offering the gifts of fearlessness and harmlessness to everyone. You have nothing to fear from me!

Because these categories and causes of hurt, harm, betrayal, abuse, and abandonment are universal, I have based the Guided Forgiveness Meditations on these themes.

[10] Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

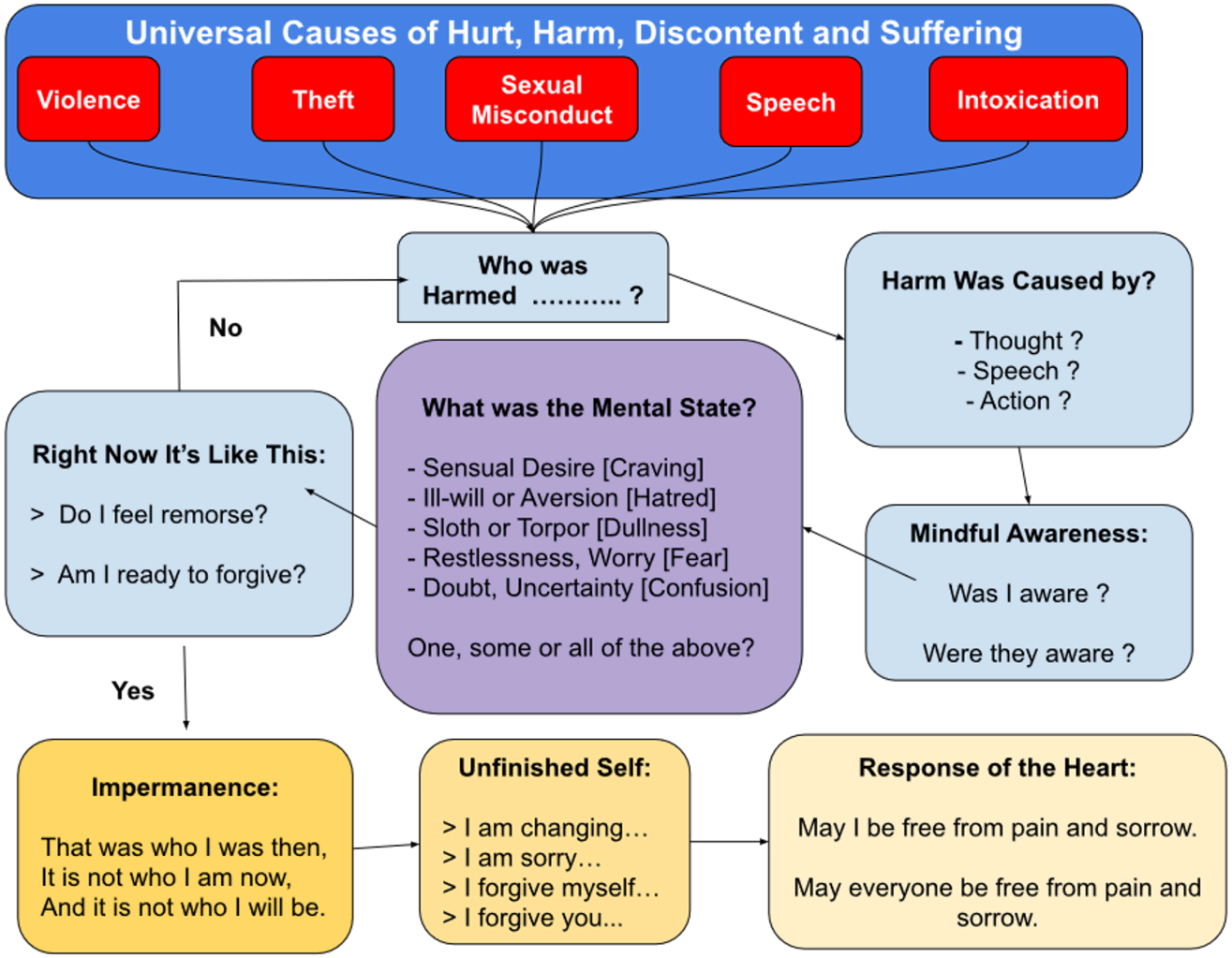
The Universal Precepts – A Personal Commitment to Harmlessness

If we commit to living in harmony, as best as possible, with the Universal Precepts, then there may be fewer occasions we need to practice forgiveness, including self-forgiveness.

- *"I set the intention not to harm myself or others [by my thoughts, by my words or] by my actions."*
- *"I set the intention not to take anything that has not been freely given."*
- *"I set the intention not to harm myself or others by my sexual [and sensual] misconduct."*
- *"I set the intention not to harm myself or others by false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander."*
- *"I set the intention to refrain from taking alcohol and other drugs that impair my mindfulness."*

Investigation and Insight into Personal Remorse and Forgiveness

This diagram depicts a possible course of investigation into how and why personal hurt and harm arise. This deeper examination is not essential, but it may provide valuable insights into our own and other people's behaviour.[11]



[11] Based on and adapted from the free book Forgiveness For Everyone by Jeff Oliver.

The First Gift: Not To Cause Harm By My Thoughts, My Words Or My Actions

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

> *"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, **abandoning the taking of life**, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression".* [12]

In a different talk called the **Dhammika Sutta**, the Buddha advises a lay-follower named Dhammika of the ascetic practices undertaken by sensible people:

> *"Now I will tell you the layman's duty. Following it, a lay-disciple would be virtuous… He should not kill a living being, nor cause it to be killed, nor should he incite another to kill. Do not injure any being, either strong or weak, in the world."* [13]

An alternative translation -	*"Kill not any beings nor cause them to be killed,* *and do not approve of them having been killed,* *put by the rod for all that lives—* *whether they are weak, or strong in the world."*

Modern Perspectives on Ancient Principles

The Vietnamese monk **Thich Nhat Hanh** offers present-day practitioners an alternative viewpoint on the Five Universal Precepts, which he calls **The Five Mindfulness Trainings** and describes as representing a Buddhist vision for global spirituality and ethics.

Reverence For Life

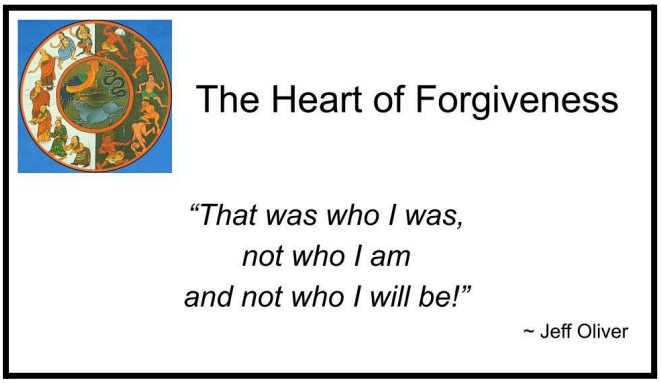
> *"Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world."* [14]

[12] Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

[13] "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html

[14] The Five Mindfulness trainings - https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/

References To Support The First Gift



"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and others [15]

"Forgiveness is not about others, it is about yourself. The only true forgiveness is that within your own heart, don't wait for it to come from others, for that is merely a reflection of your own forgiveness."

Jeff Oliver 'Forgiveness for Everyone'

"And so, this spiritual life is not lived for the sake of possessions, honour, and popularity, or for accomplishment in ethics, or for accomplishment in concentration, or for knowledge and vision. Rather, the goal, the core, and final end of the spiritual life is the unshakable freedom of the heart."

~ Buddha[16]

"In the physical health world, you are what you eat,
in the mental health world, you are what you think."

~ Harvey Whiteford[17]

"If my Heart could do my thinking
and my Head began to feel
Would I look upon a world anew?
And know what's truly real."

~ Van Morrison[18]

"And what is the power of mindfulness?
It's when a practitioner is mindful. They have the utmost mindfulness and alertness and can remember and recall what was said and done long ago. ***This is called the power of mindfulness."***

~ Buddha

[15] The phrase "an eye for an eye makes the (whole) world blind" and other similar phrases has been conveyed by, but not limited to George Perry Graham (1914) on capital punishment debate argument, Louis Fischer (1951) describing philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. (1958) in the context of racial violence.

[16] Paraphrased from The Longer Simile of the Heartwood : Mahāsāropamasutta MN: 29

[17] Prevention: the new holy grail of treating mental illness | Society | The Guardian

[18] From the song *'I Forgot That Love Existed'* written by Van Morrison.

References About Mental Attitudes and Behaviours

The Path of Wisdom (the Dhammapada[19]) is a collection of 423 verses spoken by the Buddha, which are often learned by heart by novice monks and nuns. The first six verses remind us of the power of our thoughts:

1. Mind precedes all mental states.
   Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.
   If, with an impure mind, a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him
   Like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

2. Mind precedes all mental states.
   Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.
   If, with a pure mind, a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him
   Like his never-departing shadow.

3. *"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"*;
   those who dwell on such thoughts will never become free from hatred.

4. *"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"*;
   those who do not dwell on such thoughts will truly become free from hatred.

5. Returning hatred with hatred will never bring hatred to an end in this world;
   only by replacing hatred with love will hatred come to an end.
   This is an ancient and eternal law.

   Alternatively:

   Returning self-hatred with self-hatred will never bring self-hatred to an end in this world;
   Only by replacing self-hatred with self-love will self-hatred come to an end.
   This is an ancient and eternal law.

6. Some do not realise that one day, we all must die.
   But those who do realise this settle their quarrels.

Two Types of Thinking - The Power of Thoughts

"Whatever a person frequently thinks about and ponders upon,
that will become the inclination of her mind."

Buddha[20]

[19] The Dhammapada (423 verses) is freely available from various sources including but not limited to Dhammapada—Suttas and Parallels or Dhammapada: The Path of Dhamma

[20] Paraphrased from the Buddha's talk 'Two Types of Thought' - MN 19: Dvedhāvitakkasutta—Bhikkhu Sujato

Alternatively paraphrased:

"Whatever you frequently think about and ponder will shape your Heart.
The shape of your Heart will shape your World."

And from a different perspective:

"The things you frequently think about determine the quality of your mind.
Your soul takes on the colour of your thoughts."

~ Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

*"Any two cells or systems of cells that are repeatedly active at the same time will tend to become 'associated,' so that activity in one facilitates activity in the other." **

~ Donal Hebb from his book "The Organization of Behavior" (1949)

*Note the well known mnemonic phrase: *"Cells that fire together, wire together"* which summarises Hebb's theory is attributed to Carla Shatz[21]

"Where attention goes, neural firing flows and neural connection grows."[22]

~ Daniel J. Seigal, MD

"Instead of reality being passively recorded by the brain, it is actively constructed by it."[23]

~ David Eagleman

"Reality is a controlled hallucination."[24]

~ Anil Seth

Mental Dis-ease[25]

"…there are two kinds of illness. What two? Mental and physical. Some people can claim to be free of physical illness for a year, or two, or three years … even up to a hundred years or more. But it's very hard to find people in the world who can claim to be free of mental illness even for a moment, apart from those who have overcome the intoxicating inclinations."[26]

~ Buddha

The Brahma Viharas (Heart Practices)

The **Brahma Viharas**, the **Divine Abodes,** the **Four Immeasurable Qualities of Heart** or the **Four True Faces of Love** are attitudes to be developed and realised concerning ourselves, our human experience, and other sentient beings.

[21] Shatz CJ. 1992. The developing brain. Sci. Am. 267, 60–67. (10.1038/scientificamerican0992-60) [PubMed] [CrossRef] [Google Scholar]

[22] Mind - Dr. Dan Siegel - Chapter 28 - Neuroplasticity & Cultural Systems

[23] Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain – David Eagleman

[24] "Reality is a controlled hallucination" Anil Seth and Anil Seth: Your brain hallucinates your conscious reality | TED Talk

[25] Paraphrased from Peter Harvey's translation in Introductory Reflections on Buddhism and Healing

[26] The **"intoxicating inclinations"** are the craving for sensual pleasures, the craving for existence and continued existence, and the inclination towards ignorance, not just in the sense of not knowing how things actually are but also in the sense of not wanting to know!

The only wise response to life is the response of the heart. I would add two further attitudes to the traditional list of four: Generosity and Forgiveness.

- **Loving-Kindness (Mettā)** is the wish for the welfare and happiness of ourselves and others.
- **Compassion (Karuna/Anukampa)** is the wish that those suffering - including ourselves - are free from suffering.
- **Joy-Gladness (Mudita)** – rejoicing, joy and gladness at the happiness and well-being of others and for our good fortune.
- **Equanimity (Upekkha)** – the absence of preferences or bias toward all sentient beings and personal experiences.

Jesus of Nazareth puts it like this:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you."

The Prophet Muhammad said:

"In the body, there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, all the body is sound and which, if it be diseased, all the body is diseased. This part of the body is the heart."

The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness:

> *"They who want to attain peace should practice being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech.*
>
> *They will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority.*
>
> *Let them not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.*
>
> *"(And this is what he or she contemplates:)*
>
> *"May everyone be happy and safe, and may all hearts be filled with joy.*
>
> *"May all beings live in security and in peace — beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, invisible or visible, near or far away, already born, or yet to be born. May all of them dwell in perfect tranquillity.*
>
> *"Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.*
>
> *"Just as a mother loves and protects her only child at the risk of her own life, cultivate boundless love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. Let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below, and across. Our love will know no obstacles. Our heart will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity.*
>
> *"Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake,* ***we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own heart****. This is the noblest way of living.*
>
> *"Free from wrong views, greed, and sensual desires, living in beauty and realising Perfect Understanding, those who practice boundless love will certainly transcend birth and death."*
>
> Metta Sutta, Sutta Nipata 1.8
>
> Translated by Thich Nhat Hanh

Self-Study Ideas and Practice

These suggestions are entirely voluntary and optional

- **Quiz:** How Forgiving Are You? - Wholehearted Living
- Using the worksheet on the next page, fill in some examples you might work with when practising Forgiveness through the lens of the **1st Universal Precept** (physical hurt).
- Take a closer look at the Personal Remorse & Forgiveness Flowchart to develop an understanding of how unskillful thoughts, words, and actions lead to suffering.
- **Watch:** The YouTube video Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #1 or Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #2

Heart Practice One - 'Short' Self-Forgiveness Meditation

Developing a 'Heart of Forgiveness' can be an effective antidote to guilt, shame, resentment and regret. You might try this contemplation at least once while exploring 'forgiveness' as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular prayer, mindfulness or insight practice. As little as one 10-minute contemplation per day can have noticeable benefits. Take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite one, some or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

I forgive myself for the mistakes of the past.

I forgive myself for not understanding.

That was who I was then; it is not who I am now,

And it is not who I will be in the future.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

Heart Practice Two - Develop a Heart of Loving-Kindness[27]

Developing a heart of 'Loving-kindness' is the foremost antidote to hatred, anger, and ill-will. You might try this meditation at least once while exploring 'forgiveness' as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular prayer, mindfulness or insight practice. As before, take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite one, some or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

May I be safe.
May I be well.
May I be happy.
May I love myself just as I am right now.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

Complementary Gāthā Practice

A gāthā is a verse or mantra recited (usually silently, not aloud) in rhythm with the breath. It can be used as you move through your day, as part of a sitting practice, or separately as a 10-minute meditation.

"I forgive myself for not understanding."

Lions Roar Article: How to Do Gatha Practice & Tricycle Article Tiny Gathas

[27] The Buddha's advice to the people known as the Kalamas - "*…they [should] cultivate **a heart full of Love** spreading to the first direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of hostility and ill will.*"

Worksheet - Personal Examples Of Hurt Caused By Violence

"I will train myself not to hurt myself or others by my thoughts, words, or actions."

Write one or two examples for each category of physical hurt :

The ways that I have hurt others physically or emotionally through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that I have hurt myself physically or emotionally through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that I have been hurt physically or emotionally by others' thoughts, their words or their actions:

The Second Gift: Not To Take Anything That Has Not Been Freely Given

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

> *"Furthermore, **abandoning taking what is not given (stealing)**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second gift, the second great gift — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans".* [28]

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

> *"A disciple should avoid taking anything from anywhere knowing it (to belong to another). He should not steal nor incite another to steal. He should completely avoid theft.*[29]

An alternative translation [30]	*"What is "ungiven" — anything, anywhere,* *that's known to be others', it is theft one should avoid.* *Neither order things taken,* *nor others' removal approve—* *all of this "ungiven" let the hearkener avoid."*

True Happiness

Thich Nhat Hanh continues:

> *Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and stop contributing to climate change.*[31]

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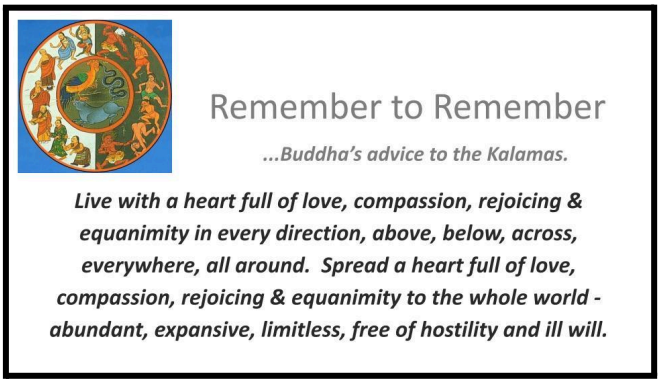
[28] Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

[29] "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013 - Dhammika Sutta

[30] "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills - Snp 2.14: Dhammikasutta—Laurence Khantipalo Mills

[31] The Five Mindfulness trainings - The Five Mindfulness Trainings | Plum Village

References To Support The Second Gift



"It is freeing to become aware that we do not have to be victims of our past and can learn new ways of responding. But there is a step beyond this recognition... It is the step of forgiveness. Forgiveness is love practised among people who love poorly. It sets us free without wanting anything in return."

~ Henri J. M. Nouwen

"There is nothing whatsoever
That is not made easier through acquaintance.
So, through becoming acquainted with small harms
I should learn to patiently accept greater harms."

~ Shantideva

Self-Study Ideas and Practice

These suggestions are entirely voluntary and optional but, when undertaken, may enhance your experience of the Heart of Forgiveness:

- Using the worksheet below, fill in some examples you might work with when practising Forgiveness through the lens of the **2nd Universal Precept** (Stealing).
- Take another look at the Personal Remorse & Forgiveness Flowchart to identify if we are compelled to forgive when we are not ready and able.
- **Watch:** The YouTube video Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #3

Heart Practice Three - Develop a Heart of Compassion[32]

Developing a heart of 'Compassion' is a direct antidote to cruelty and pity towards ourselves and others. You might try this meditation at least once while exploring 'forgiveness' as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular prayer, mindfulness or insight practice. As before, take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite one, some or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

May I be free of pain and sorrow.
May I be free from fear and danger.
May I hold myself with great care and great compassion.
May I find peace and healing in this moment.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

Complementary Gāthā Practice

A gāthā is a verse recited (usually silently, not aloud) in rhythm with the breath as part of mindfulness practice. It can be used either in daily life as you move through your day, as part of your sitting practice or separately as a 10-minute meditation.

"I forgive myself for the mistakes of the past."

[32] The Buddha's advice to the Kalamas - *"They [should] cultivate a heart full of Compassion spreading to the first direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of compassion to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of hostility and ill will."*

Worksheet - Personal Examples Of Harm Caused By Theft

"I will train myself not to take anything that has not been freely given to me (or withholding that which I should have given to others)."

Write one or two examples for each category of harm :

The ways that I have harmed others by stealing or withholding through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that I have harmed myself by stealing or withholding through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that I have been harmed by others stealing or withholding what was rightfully mine:

The Third Gift: Not To Cause Suffering Through Sexual Misconduct

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

> *"Furthermore, **abandoning illicit sex**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third gift, the third great gift— original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans".* [33]

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

> *"A wise man should avoid unchastity as (he would avoid falling into) a pit of glowing charcoal. If unable to lead a celibate life, he should not go to another's wife.*[34]

An alternative translation [35]	*"Let the intelligent person live a celibate life,* *as one would avoid a pit of glowing coals;* *but being unable to live the celibate life,* *go not beyond the bounds with others' partners."*

True Love

Thich Nhat Hanh continues:

> *Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.*[36]

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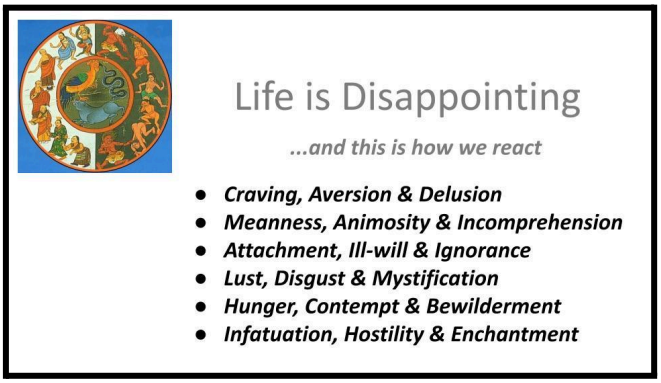
[33] Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

[34] "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html

[35] "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills

[36] The Five Mindfulness trainings - https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/

References To Support The Third Gift



"How wonderful you are in your being,
I delight that you are here.
I take joy in your good fortune,
May your happiness continue and increase."

~ 17th Century Sri Lankan Mudita Blessing
translated by John Peacock

"Without freedom from the past, there is no freedom at all, because the mind is never new, fresh, innocent."
~ J. Krishnamurti

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice..."
~ Saint Paul the Apostle

"Mindfulness is about understanding. You have to use wise thinking to decide how to handle things; you cannot limit your practice to continuously being aware."
~ Sayadaw U Tejaniya

"Let us be practical and ask the question, How do we love our enemies?
First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love."
~ *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*[37]

[37] Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 'A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings'

References About Mental Attitudes and Behaviours

The Buddha's Four Realisations (Truths or Realities) and Possible Responses to 'Life'

- Life is difficult and disappointing, e.g. it does not meet expectations!
    - **R**ecognising life for what it is: to be embraced.
        - A wise response of the Heart - **Compassion**.

- We want (things to be different) which just makes matters worse.
    - **A**bandon compulsions: let go of wanting (things to be different).
        - A wise response of the Heart - **Loving-kindness**.

- We can break free of wanting (things to be different).
    - **F**amiliarise yourself with the absence of wanting (things to be different).
        - A wise response of the Heart - **Joy-Gladness**

- A Middle Way we can practice to help with life's disappointments.
    - **T**rain mind and body, cultivate wise attitudes and appropriate qualities.
        - A wise response of the Heart - **Equanimity**.

Self-Study Ideas and Practice

These suggestions are entirely voluntary and optional but, when undertaken, may enhance your experience of the Heart of Forgiveness:

- **Workbook:** Using the worksheet on the next page, fill in some examples you might work with when practising Forgiveness through the lens of the **3rd Precept** (sexual misconduct).
- **Reading:** The Buddha's Advice to the **Kalamas -** SuttaCentral.net
- **Watch:** The YouTube video Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #4

Heart Practice Four - Develop a Heart of Joy-Gladness[38]

Developing a heart of '**Joy-gladness**' is an antidote to envy, jealousy and resentment. You might try this meditation at least once while exploring 'forgiveness' as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular prayer, mindfulness or insight practice.

This practice takes John Peacock's translation of the above-mentioned 'Mudita' blessing and turns it back on to ourselves, as suggested by the meditation teacher Christina Feldman.

As before, take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite one, some or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

How wonderful I am in my being,
I delight that I am here,
I take joy in my good fortune;
May my happiness continue and increase.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

Complementary Gāthā Practice

The gāthā is a verse recited (usually silently, not aloud) in rhythm with the breath as part of mindfulness practice. It can be used either in daily life as you move through your day, as part of your sitting practice or separately as a 10-minute meditation.

"How wonderful I am in my being."

[38] The Buddha's advice to the Kalamas - *they should "cultivate **a heart full of Rejoicing** spreading to the first direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of rejoicing to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of hostility and ill will."*

Worksheet - Personal Examples of Betrayal Caused by Sexual Misconduct

"I will train myself not to cause suffering through sexual misconduct."

Write one or two examples for each category of betrayal :

The ways that I have betrayed others by my sexual misconduct through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that I have betrayed myself by my sexual misconduct through my thoughts, my words or my actions:
The ways that other's sexual misconduct has betrayed me through their thoughts, their words or their actions:

The Fourth Gift: "Not To Speak Untruthfully, Harshly, And Abstaining From Gossip And Slander."

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

> *"Furthermore, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth gift, the fourth great gift — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans".* [39]

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

> *"Having entered a royal court or a company of people, he should not speak lies. He should not speak lies (himself) nor incite others to do so. He should completely avoid falsehood.*[40]

An alternative translation [41]	*"In government assembly or artisans' guild,* *or one to another, speak not what is false,* *not others compel nor approve of their lies,* *all kinds of untruthfulness you should avoid."*

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Thich Nhat Hanh continues:

> *Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognise and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.*[42]

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[39] Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

[40] "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html

[41] "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills

[42] The Five Mindfulness trainings - https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/

References To Support The Fourth Gift

"Speak only such words
that do not hurt yourself
nor harm others;
such speech is truly well spoken."

~ Vaṅgīsa[43] (A senior monk at the time of the Buddha[44])

"Most of what we say and do is not essential," Marcus Aurelius reminds us. *"If you can eliminate it, you'll have more time and more tranquillity. Ask yourself at every moment, 'Is this necessary?'"*

Idle chatter to be avoided *"...conversations about kings, robbers, & ministers of state; armies, alarms & battles; food & drink; clothing, furniture, garlands & scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women & heroes; the gossip of the street & the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world & of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not."*

~ Buddha

References About Mental Attitudes and Behaviours

"...when someone is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no evil, I tell you, that they would not do. So you should train like this: 'I will not tell a lie, even for a joke.'"

Paraphrased from the Buddha's talk to his 7-year-old son Rahula

"The mind is made up by what it feeds upon."

~ William James

"Thoughts become perception, perception becomes reality. Alter your thoughts, alter your reality."

~ William James

Critical Points For Mindfulness Of Speech

[43] https://suttacentral.net/thag21.1/en/sujato
[44] https://suttacentral.net/search?query=Va%E1%B9%85g%C4%ABsa

The Buddha taught there were five things to consider before speaking. [45] Is what you're about to say:

1. Factual and true
2. Helpful or beneficial
3. Spoken with kindness and good-will (that is, hoping for the best for all involved)
4. Endearing (that is, spoken gently, in a way the other person can hear)
5. Timely (occasionally something true, helpful, and kind will not be endearing or easy for someone to hear, in which case we think carefully about when to say it)

Excerpt from **Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness**: Walking the Buddha's Path by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana – Wisdom Publications[46]

- Skillful speech requires that you abstain from lying, malicious words, harsh language, and useless talk.
- Lying by omission is still lying.
- Malicious talk is speech that destroys other people's friendships or damages their reputations.
- Verbal abuse, profanity, sarcasm, hypocrisy, and excessively blunt or belittling criticism are all examples of harsh language.
- Harsh language hurts others and debases you.
- Gossip and idle talk lead to quarrels and misunderstandings, waste your time, and create a confused state of mind.
- All unnecessary speech not motivated by generosity, loving-friendliness, and compassion is harmful.
- The test of Skillful Speech is to stop and ask yourself before you speak: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it beneficial? Does it harm anyone? Is this the right time to say something?"
- Using mindfulness to strengthen your resolution to say nothing hurtful and to use only soft, well-chosen words can bring harmony to any difficult situation.

[45] Buddha's Teachings Part 4: Right Speech - Factual, Helpful, Kind, Pleasant, and Timely

[46] Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: Walking the Buddha's Path

Self-Study Ideas and Practice

These suggestions are entirely voluntary and optional but, when undertaken, may enhance your experience of the Heart of Forgiveness:

- Using the worksheet below, fill in some examples you might work with when practising Forgiveness through the lens of the **4th Universal Precept** (Harmful Speech).
- **Watch:** The YouTube video Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #5

Heart Practice Five - Develop a Heart of Equanimity[47]

Developing a heart of '**Equanimity**' (Karuna/Anukampa) promotes self-balance and 'creative acceptance'[48] and leads to a wise perspective of things as they are. You might try this meditation at least once this week as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular practice. As little as one 10-minute meditation per day can have noticeable benefits. Take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite some or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

May I remember and accept that thoughts, words and actions have results.
May I know and accept things just as they are.
May I find stillness within change.
May I be at peace and balanced in mind.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

Complementary Gāthā Practice

The gāthā is a verse recited (usually silently, not aloud) in rhythm with the breath as part of mindfulness practice. It can be used daily as you move through your day, as part of your sitting practice, or separately as a dedicated 10-minute meditation.

"May I know and accept things just as they are."

[47] The Buddha's advice to the Kalamas - *"They cultivate* [Bhāvanā] ***a heart full of Equanimity*** *spreading to the first direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of euanimity to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of hostility and ill will."*

[48] Term used by Martine Batchelor.

Worksheet - Personal Examples of False and Abusive Speech

"I will train myself to speak truthfully, kindly, abstaining from gossip and slander."

Write one or two examples for each category of abuse :

The ways that I have abused others by my speech through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander:
The ways that I have abused myself by my speech through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander:
The ways that others' speech has abused me through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander:

The Fifth Gift: "To Refrain From Intoxicants And Intoxication."

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

> *"Furthermore, **abandoning the use of intoxicants**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift— original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans".* [49]

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

> *"A layman who has chosen to practice this Dhamma should not indulge in the drinking of intoxicants. He should not drink them nor encourage others to do so, realising it leads to madness. Through intoxication, foolish people perform evil deeds and cause other heedless people to do likewise. He should avoid intoxication, this occasion for demerit, which stupefies the mind, and is the pleasure of foolish people."*[50]

An alternative translation [51]

Whatever householder this Dharma approves,
in maddening drink should never indulge,
nor make others drink, nor approve if they do,
knowing it leads to a mind that's disturbed.

Fools do many evils because they are drunk,
while causing other people to be negligent.
This basis of demerit should be avoided,
but fools are delighted, confused with mind upset.

Nourishment and Healing

Thich Nhat Hanh continues:

> *Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriments, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.* [52]

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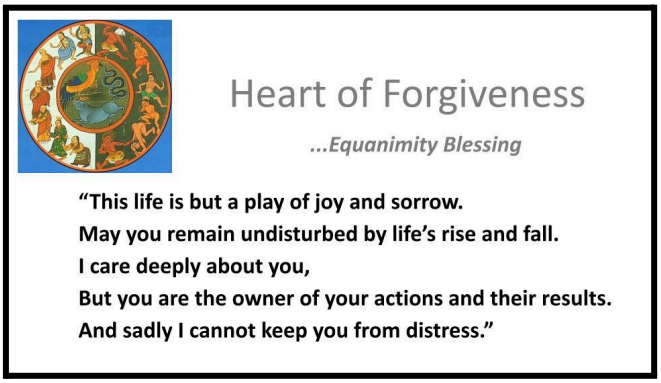
[49] Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

[50] "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html

[51] "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills

[52] The Five Mindfulness trainings - https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/

References To Support The Fifth Gift



"This life is but a play of joy and sorrow.
May you remain undisturbed by life's rise and fall.
I care deeply about you,
But you are the owner of your actions and their results.
And sadly, I cannot keep you from distress."

~ 17th Century Sri Lankan Equanimity Blessing
translated by John Peacock

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

~ Mahatma Gandhi

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

"The 'get ahead' mind seeks protection, the 'get along' mind seeks connection."

~ Vince Cullen

*A student monk asked **Zen Master Yunmen**, "What are the teachings of a whole lifetime?" Yunmen answered, "**An appropriate response**."*

~ Yunmen

References About Mental Attitudes and Behaviours

"Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives."

~ William James

"Some people live as though they are already dead. There are people moving around us who are consumed by their past, terrified of their future, and stuck in their anger and jealousy. They are not alive; they are just walking corpses."

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

"There is no fire like lust; there is no grip like hatred; there is no net like delusion; there is no river like craving."

~ Buddha

"Change your mind, change your life, change your world!"

~ Jeff Oliver, from his book 'Forgiveness for Everyone'

"Let the flower of compassion blossom in the rich soil of maître, and water it with the good water of equanimity in the cool, refreshing shade of joy."[53]

~ Longchenpa

Heart Practice Six - Cultivate 'Wise-Hearthedness' as an Appropriate Response

The Zen Master Yunmen suggested that the answer to life is 'an appropriate response'. Perhaps the only appropriate response to life is the response of the heart. You might try this meditation at least once this week as a standalone practice or, if you have one, book-ended with your regular practice. Take a comfortable posture, imagine that you are breathing in and out through your heart, and recite one, some, or all of these phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

May I have stillness… in the midst of chaos.

May I be at ease… in the midst of discomfort.

May I be safe and well… in the midst of uncertainty.

May I live with kindness… in the midst of all that is difficult.

May I find joy… in the midst of the ordinary and the mundane.

Short version:

May I have stillness.

May I be at ease.

May I be safe and well.

May I live with kindness.

May I find joy.

[Feel free to use any phrases that work for you.]

[53] Longchenpa https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longchenpa

Self-Study Ideas and Practice

These suggestions are entirely voluntary and optional.

- Using the worksheet below, fill in some examples you might work with when practising Forgiveness through the **5th Universal Precept** (Intoxication) lens.
- **Reading**: Jeff Oliver - 'Forgiveness for Everyone' book (PDF). This book is the inspiration for the Personal Remorse Flowchart and is the origin of the quote:

  "That was who I was,
  Not who I am,
  And not who I will be…"

- **Watch:** The YouTube video Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #6

Complementary Gāthā Practice

The gāthā is a verse recited (usually silently, not aloud) in rhythm with the breath as part of mindfulness practice. It can be used daily as you move through your day or as part of your formal sitting practice.

"May I be safe, may I be well, and may I be happy."

Worksheet - Personal Examples of Abandonment Caused by the Use and Abuse of Intoxicants

"I will train myself to refrain from intoxicants and intoxication."

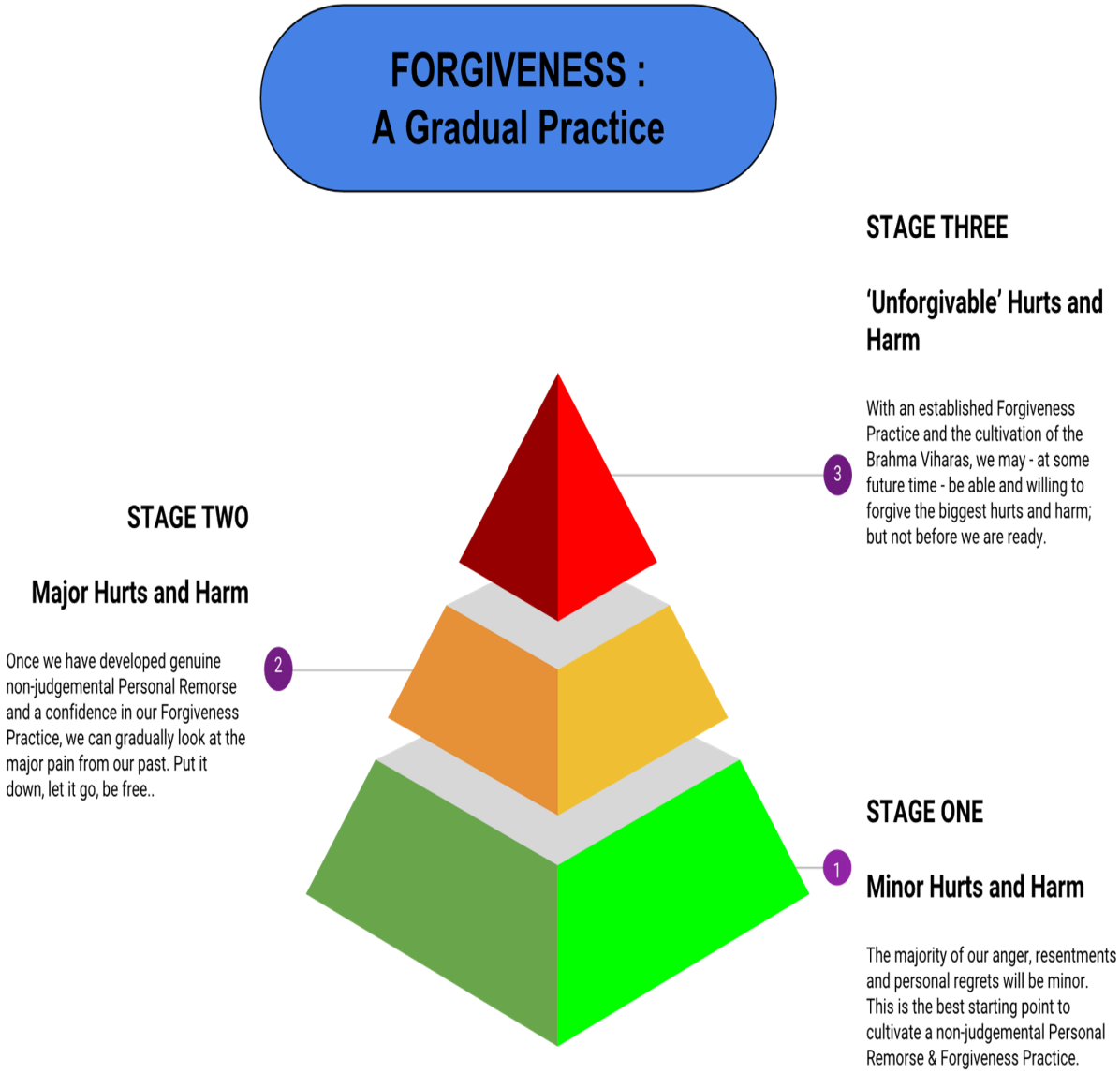
Write one or two examples for each category of abandonment:

The ways that I have abandoned others by my intoxication, addiction or compulsions:
The ways that I abandoned myself by my intoxication, addiction or compulsions:
The ways that I have been abandoned by Other's intoxication, addiction or compulsions:

THE PRACTICE

The Three Stages of Forgiveness

You may not feel a release from some great pains, but only the burden, anguish, or anger you still hold. Touch this



softly; touch this with loving-kindness. Be forgiving of yourself for not yet being ready to let go.[54]If we are not ready and able to forgive ourselves or others, we might set the noble aspiration (Sajja/Sacca) that one day, with practice, we intend to forgive everyone. In this way, we set the intention, but we let go of the expectation as to when, where or how that might happen.[55]

[54] Jack Kornfield – author of the book 'Path with Heart'

[55] Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/

One Precept at a Time

It is suggested that Remorse and Forgiveness are cultivated through the lens of one Universal Precept at a time. You may find it helpful to use the personal examples worksheets on the previous pages to prepare for this practice.

Precept 1: Forgiveness – for violence
For all of the ways that I have hurt you physically or emotionally ……. I am sorry.
For all of the ways that I have hurt myself physically or emotionally……. I forgive myself.
For all of the ways that you have hurt me physically or emotionally……. I forgive you.

Precept 2: Forgiveness – for stealing or taking what was not freely given
For all of the ways that I have harmed you by taking what was not mine……. I am sorry.
For all of the ways that I have harmed myself by taking what was not mine……. I forgive myself.
For all of the ways that you have harmed me by taking what I did not freely give……. I forgive you.

Precept 3: Forgiveness – for the sexual misconduct
For all of the ways that I have betrayed you through my sensual misconduct……. I am sorry.
For all of the ways that I have betrayed myself through my sensual misconduct……. I forgive myself.
For all of the ways that you have betrayed me through your sensual misconduct……. I forgive you.

Precept 4: Forgiveness – for false speech or harsh words and thoughts
For all of the ways that I have abused you through my harsh speech or lies……. I am sorry.
For all of the ways that I have abused myself through my harsh speech or lies……. I forgive myself.
For all of the ways that you have abused me through your harsh speech or lies……. I forgive you.

Precept 5: Forgiveness – for the suffering caused by intoxication
For all of the ways that I have abandoned you through my intoxication or drug use……. I am sorry.
For all the ways that I have abandoned myself through my intoxication or drug use……. I forgive myself.
For all the ways that you have abandoned me through your intoxication or drug use……. I forgive you.

An Embodied Posture

Whatever meditation posture you adopt for your practice, the most crucial aspect is your intention – as Gil Fronsdal suggests – your posture should represent your Heart's desire to awaken, your Heart's desire to move away from misery towards the end of misery without creating yet more suffering for ourselves or causing more suffering for anyone else along the way.

Guided Meditation Script

The First Path: Forgiveness for the Harm We Have Caused Others

The first path of our practice is to express remorse and forgive ourselves for the hurt or harm caused to others.

We might imagine we are breathing in and out of the Heart area.

We recite the following phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind:

> *I ask for forgiveness from others for whatever harmful things I have done:*
> *the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.*
>
> *(1) I now remember how I **hurt** you physically and emotionally.*
> *--- I am sorry.*
> *(2) I now remember how I **harmed** you by taking what you did not freely give [or by withholding that which I should have given you].*
> *--- I am sorry.*
> *(3) I now remember how I **betrayed** you through my sexual misconduct.*
> *--- I am sorry.*
> *(4) I now remember how I **abused** you through my words, through my lies, through my angry, slanderous, gossiping speech.*
> *--- I am sorry.*
> *(5) I now remember how I **abandoned** you through my intoxication.*
> *--- I am sorry.*
>
> *Actions born out of my pain, out of my fear, out of my hurt. Actions born out of my not knowing (ignorance).*
>
> *But that was who I was then,*
> *not who I am now,*
> *and not who I will be in the future.*
>
> *You have nothing to fear from me today,*
>
> *For the thoughts, words and acts of pain that I have inflicted upon you,*
> *I am sorry,*
> *I forgive myself.*
> *For the harm I have caused you, knowingly or unknowingly,*
> *I am sorry,*
> *I forgive myself.*
> *For the sorrow I have caused you,*

I am sorry,
I forgive myself.[56]

Frequently checking in with our heart centre to note the feelings that we might find there - resistance, conflict, blockages, anger, hatred, surrender - but you may find relief and even release.

[*What does it feel like to let go of the self-view of the* ***wrongdoer****?*]

The Second Path: Forgiveness for the Harm We Have Caused Ourselves

The second path to forgiveness is towards ourselves for all the hurt and harm we have inflicted on ourselves through our thoughts, through our words, spoken or not spoken, and through actions.

I ask for and extend forgiveness to myself for whatever harmful things I have done to myself: the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.

(1) I now remember how I ***hurt*** *myself physically and emotionally.*
--- I forgive myself.
(2) I now remember how I ***harmed*** *myself by stealing from others or withholding what I should have given myself.*
--- I forgive myself.
(3) I now remember how I ***betrayed*** *myself through my sexual misconduct.*
--- I forgive myself.
(4) I now remember how I ***abused*** *myself through my words, through my lies, through my angry speech, through my words spoken and unspoken.*
--- I forgive myself.
(5) I now remember how I ***abandoned*** *myself through my intoxication, my addictions, and my compulsions.*
--- I forgive myself.

Actions born out of my pain, out of my fear, out of my hurt. Actions born out of my not knowing (ignorance).

But that was who I was then,
not who I am now,
and not who I will be in the future.

I now ask for, and extend to myself, a full and heartfelt forgiveness,
I forgive myself for not understanding,
I forgive myself for the mistakes of the past.

For the thoughts, words and acts of pain that I have inflicted on myself,
I offer myself forgiveness.
For the harm that I have caused myself, knowingly or unknowingly,
I offer myself forgiveness.
For the sorrow that I have caused myself,
I offer myself forgiveness.
I wholeheartedly forgive myself,
I forgive myself now.

[56] Adapted from Christina Feldman's book – Compassion ~ Listening to the Cries of the World

Frequently checking in with our heart centre to note the feelings that we might find there -
resistance, conflict, blockages, anger, hatred, surrender, or maybe you will find relief, and possibly some release.

[*Can you let go of the identity of being both the **perpetrator** and the **victim** of these hurts?*]

The Third Path: Forgiveness for the Harm Caused By Others

The last path to forgiveness is towards those who have hurt or harmed us, those who have abused us, and those who have abandoned us.

Of course, some hurts are so significant we may feel we can never forgive them. But it is suggested that we place these hurts on the back burner and not let them overwhelm our practice. The Buddha suggested that the path to liberation, the path to freedom, is a gradual path. We should only take on that which we can work with. We only take on that which we can manage.

Those of us who have suffered more extensive and traumatic wounds, seemingly unforgivable hurts, and I would suggest that applies to everyone here, we might simply set the intention that one day - with this practice - with my Buddhist practice - I have an aspiration that I will be able to forgive that person - that event. But right now, right here, I am not ready. So, having set the intention, we can let go of the expectation of where, when, or how that forgiveness may come.

We might start this stage of our forgiveness practice by bringing the tiny hurts, slights, petty betrayals and minor abuses into the present moment.

> *As far as I am ready and as far as I can, I forgive others for whatever harmful things they have done: the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings committed intentionally or unintentionally with body, word and heart.*
>
> *(1) I now remember how you **hurt** me physically and emotionally.*
> *…I offer you my forgiveness.*
> *(2) I now remember how you **harmed** me by taking that which I did not give or by your withholding that which you should have given to me.*
> *…I offer you my forgiveness.*
> *(3) I now remember how you **betrayed** me through your sexual misconduct.*
> *…I offer you my forgiveness.*
> *(4) I now remember how you **abused** me through your false speech, your angry words, your gossip and slander.*
> *…I offer you my forgiveness.*
> *(5) I now remember how you **abandoned** me through your intoxication, through your addictions and your compulsions.*
> *…I offer you my forgiveness.*
>
> *Actions born out of your pain, out of your fear, out your anger or simply out of your not knowing*
>
> *I have carried the pain and sorrow of your actions in my heart for too long, and now I put them down.*
> *…now, I set you free,*
> *…now, I release you.*
>
> *You have nothing to fear from me.*
>
> *For the thoughts, words and acts of pain that you have inflicted on me,*

I offer you my forgiveness.
For the harm that you have caused me, knowingly or unknowingly,
I offer you my forgiveness.
For the sorrow that you have caused me,
I offer you my forgiveness.

I forgive you now.

[*Can you let go of the identity of being a **victim** of these hurts? What purpose does this self-view serve?*]

Resources

YouTube videos of guided Forgiveness Meditations -

YouTube Guided Meditation - Practice the Practice

Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #1 with Vince Cullen

YouTube Guided Meditation - Forgiveness for Violence

Heart Of Forgiveness Meditation #2 with Vince Cullen

YouTube Guided Meditation - Forgiveness for Theft

Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #3 with Vince Cullen

YouTube Guided Meditation - Forgiveness for Sexual Misconduct

Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #4 with Vince Cullen

YouTube Guided Meditation - Forgiveness for False & Abusive Speech

Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #5 with Vince Cullen

YouTube Guided Meditation - Forgiveness for Intoxication

Heart of Forgiveness Meditation #6 with Vince Cullen

Reflections on suffering & mindfulness of death practice with Vince Cullen

Other links for further investigation:

Books, Articles and Videos:

'Meditations' – Marcus Aurelius

'Being You' – Anil Seth (Guardian article)

'Your Brain Hallucinates Your Conscious Reality' – Anil Seth (TED Talk)

'AfterNow' – Professor Philip Hanlon

'Nibbana for Everyone' - Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Wat Suan Mokkh)

From a **neuroscience perspective**, I found these books and video by Lisa Feldman-Barrett very helpful:

Book: How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain
Book: Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain
Video: How Emotions are Made (Cinematic Lecture)

Miscellaneous Related Links

- The Greater Good Science Center - How to Overcome Barriers to Forgiveness
- International Forgiveness Institute - Forgiveness Education for Schools etc
- Core Process Psychotherapy - Buddhist psychology and Mindfulness-based psychotherapy
- Sesame Street: Sesame Street: Big Bird Sings about Mistakes
- Van Morrison: I Forgot That Love Existed
- Vince Cullen - Travelling Simply to Simply Travel

Impermanence & Forgiveness

*You might **remember-to-remember** just how far it is that you have come,*
And not just how far it is that you might imagine that you have to go.

So you might not be where you think that you want to be,
But neither are you where you used to be![57]

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That was who I was yesterday,
It is not who I am today,
And not who I will be tomorrow.[58]

[57] Paraphrased from a quote by Rick Warren

[58] Paraphrased from the free book 'Forgiveness for Everyone' by Jeff Oliver
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About Vince Cullen

Having drunk alcoholically from the age of 14 until 39, Vince Cullen sat in his kitchen and poured a glass of lager. He made a promise to himself that this would be his last drink… ever. That was nearly 28 years ago. Since then, he has been associated with Wat Thamkrabok, the famous detox monastery in Thailand and Buddhist-oriented drug and alcohol recovery worldwide.

In 2009, Vince founded the Fifth Precept Sangha and, since then, has taught Hungry Ghost Retreats in the UK, Ireland, India, Nepal, Thailand and the USA. He is a board member of the Buddhist Recovery Network and has been a Buddhist Prison Chaplain at establishments in the UK.

More information can be read here: Vince Cullen - Wholehearted Living

Support For My Work

Dana is a Pali term meaning "generosity" or "giving". At the end of each retreat, people are allowed to donate to the teacher(s).

The retreat teachings and mentoring sessions are offered per the Buddhist tradition of Dana (*the practice and cultivation of generosity)*. Vince follows the ancient Buddhist tradition of not charging for the teachings he shares.

The organisations hosting his retreats and workshops sometimes cover all his travel expenses, but that is all.

According to Buddha, Dana is one of the central pillars upon which spiritual life is built. Buddha invented a system of "*open hands*" whereby he who shares the Buddhist teachings is dependent on the one who receives these teachings.

Both parties

- This action opens the heart of the one who offers and makes her/him think about the value of things.
- Nobody should cross his/her financial limits.
- The receiver learns not to have any expectations and to simply accept what is given.

If you would like to support Vince, you can do so at the end of each retreat or using the link below:

Dana (Donations) - Wholehearted Living