



Spirituality Simplified

An Ideal Starting Point for Those New to the Spiritual Path

A Handy Reference Guide for Experienced Seekers

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SpiritSimple Enterprises L.L.C.

Villa Park, Illinois

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9: Forgiveness

*There are people in your life,
Who've come and gone,
they've let you down,
You know they've hurt your pride,
You better put it all behind you,
because life goes on,
You keep carrying that anger,
It will eat you up inside.⁹⁹*

DON HENLEY

"THE HEART OF THE MATTER"

The term *forgiveness* is familiar to virtually all people, yet it is very likely that few truly understand its real meaning. Most individuals tend to regard forgiveness as being a truly magnanimous gesture on *their* part: one that is undertaken on behalf of the other person.

Moreover, those individuals who, as rule practice forgiveness in their lives, tend to be viewed as upstanding human beings of great moral or spiritual fiber. While some folks may merit such lofty praise, the startling truth is that at its most fundamental level, forgiveness is more a *selfish* act than a noble one.

Now it wouldn't surprise me if you are somewhat shocked by the preceding statement, as it clearly runs contrary to conventional teaching on this topic. So for clarification purposes, it should be noted that the word 'selfish' when used in this context does not have a negative meaning. Extending forgiveness to someone is selfish in the sense that it is actually more beneficial to the person doing the forgiving, than it is to the person being forgiven.

The reason for this is quite simple—a sincere act of forgiveness

⁹⁹ Mike Campbell, Don Henley and J.D. Souther, Copyright © 1989 Cass County Music/Wild Gator Music/Ice Age Music (ASCAP) (All rights reserved. Used by permission.) From the CD *The End of the Innocence*, (The David Geffen Company, manufactured exclusively by Warner Bros. Records, Inc., a Time Warner Company. 1988).

allows us to release negative energy (i.e., excessive levels of adrenaline, other stress hormones) that can literally become toxic to the cells within our bodies. This next passage from *Discover the Power Within You* by Eric Butterworth supports this very point:

*Actually, forgiveness is the simplest way
to lighten our burdens. The man who forgives
is no more saintly than one who insists upon keeping clean.
In reality, the act of forgiveness constitutes
a mental bath—letting go of something
that can only poison us within.¹⁰⁰*

Whenever we are unwilling to forgive, what we are doing is wasting a portion of our valuable present moment energy on something that no longer exists, except within the confines of our own mind. As we learned in Chapter 5, this backward ‘time-traveling’ is not the least bit empowering, for by drawing our attention from the ‘now’ it prohibits us from actually healing these outstanding issues and moving forward in life.

Within Western culture, it has only been of late that the medical establishment has begun to acknowledge that a connection does actually exist between the mind (and emotions) and a person’s physical health. In Eastern tradition this connection has been an accepted truth for centuries. Among modern day personal/spiritual growth authors, Deepak Chopra has done an excellent job of bridging this gap between Eastern and Western medicine. This excerpt from his book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* is just one example of many that substantiate the impact that state of mind has on physical health:

*Although the image of the body as mindless machine
continues to dominate mainstream Western medicine,
there is unquestionable evidence to the contrary.
Death rates from cancer and heart disease are*

¹⁰⁰ Eric Butterworth, *Discover the Power Within You*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1968) p. 154

*provably higher among people in psychological distress,
and lower among people who have a strong sense of
purpose and well-being.*¹⁰¹

Holding on to resentments (i.e., not forgiving) is also a form of psychological distress, for it is obviously a mental process rather than a physical one. Yet as you persist in clinging to your hurts by refusing to forgive, what you are actually doing is unconsciously storing negative energy within your body that may ultimately develop into some form of illness.

While some may doubt this, remember from Chapter 3 that every thought or feeling has within it the potential to manifest in some physical form. Unfortunately, because of the time it normally takes for the symptoms of a disease to develop, the vast majority of people have no clue that their own habitual negative thinking and feeling (or emotional) patterns may be at the foundation of their illness.

Some of the most compelling work in this area can be found in the writings of Louise Hay, an inspiring woman who literally healed herself of life-threatening cancer. Ms. Hay's *You Can Heal Your Life* is truly a classic book about the mind-body connection as it relates to physical health. Its basic premise is that human beings unconsciously create the 'illnesses' in their bodies, and that diseases originate from a state of unforgiving. As the following passage illustrates, Louise Hay makes it very clear that the key to healing is, in fact, forgiving:

*We need to choose to release the past and forgive everyone,
ourselves included. We may not know how to forgive;
but the very fact we say we are willing to forgive
begins the healing process. It is imperative for our own
healing that "we" release the past and forgive everyone.*¹⁰²

So, if forgiveness does have such a positive effect on both emotion-

¹⁰¹ Deepak Chopra, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, op. cit., p. 20

¹⁰² Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*, (Carson, CA: Hay House, Inc., 1984) p. 13

al and physical health, why is that most people have difficulty practicing it? One reason is that many continue to cling to old admonitions such as, ‘an eye for an eye’ or similar teachings. A second, and perhaps more prevalent reason is that by forgiving, one appears to *condone* whatever inappropriate behavior occurred.

As for the former reason, if you are a person that maintains ‘an eye for an eye’ philosophy, you might want to give some serious thought to this powerful Chinese proverb: “The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves.” With respect to the latter reason, consider this insight from the best-selling author Caroline Myss:

*Forgiving does not mean saying that what happened to you doesn't matter, or that it is all right for someone to have violated you. It simply means releasing the negative feelings you have about that event and the person or persons involved.*¹⁰³

When you do opt to forgive a person or persons that have harmed you, or one or more of your loved ones in some way, you are by no means condoning what they did – not at all. What you *are* demonstrating by practicing forgiveness is that you will not allow your psyche and/or your body to be poisoned by the negative energy associated with holding on to resentments or grudges.

Another reason that people are reluctant to forgive is the misconception that practicing forgiveness requires them to actually communicate that sentiment on either a face-to-face or written basis. In a similar vein, there is also the mistaken belief that forgiving someone implies that the forgiver is willing to personally associate with that individual. From my experience, there is no absolute requirement that you must have any personal interaction with the person you are choosing to forgive, nor does forgiving someone mean that you are obliged to ‘hang out’ with that person.

¹⁰³ Caroline Myss, Ph. D., *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*, (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1997) p. 18

Instead of personal confrontation, you can extend your feelings of forgiveness using a prayer-based technique (one such method is discussed later in this chapter), or something similar, and in the process achieve the same beneficial results as if you had handled it personally. On the other hand, if you do feel a compelling desire to handle a given matter on a personal level, then I strongly recommend that before doing so you reflect upon this additional insight from Caroline Myss:

Should you need to contact anyone for a closure discussion, make sure that you are not carrying the message of blame as a private agenda. If you are, you are not genuinely ready to let go and move on. Should you need to share your closure thoughts in a letter to the person, do so, but again, make sure your intention is to retrieve your spirit from yesterday, not to send yet another message of anger.¹⁰⁴

IS ANYTHING UNFORGIVABLE?

There are probably millions of people who would say that the act of forgiving is nearly impossible in some circumstances, particularly when it comes to the perpetrators of heinous and/or violent crimes. While this position is of course very understandable, the fact is there is really nothing that cannot be forgiven, particularly when you fully comprehend that forgiving is about letting go of the toxic thoughts and emotions within *you*.

Without question, it is very difficult to forgive someone who has done something truly atrocious, yet holding on to judgment and anger can only bring greater discomfort. It may take a long time for a person to truly embrace forgiveness under such circumstances, but if one sincerely works at it long enough, they will eventually succeed in doing so. It is a matter of coming to the awareness that

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Myss, Ph. D., *Anatomy of the Spirit*, (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1996) p. 216

forgiveness is really the only sensible option, for choosing the opposite course (i.e., holding on to resentment) carries with it the prospect of continued emotional suffering, and someday perhaps even severe physical pain as well.

Most everyone has seen the news media relate stories about people affected by violent crime who decide to visit a prison to forgive the person(s) responsible. These individuals are often portrayed as possessing almost a saint-like quality. The segments also tend to imply that what these folks did was well beyond what the average person could do. Yet as this passage from Dr. Joseph Murphy illustrates, every single one of us has the innate potential to behave in the exact same way, for the simple reason that forgiveness is as much a fundamental instinct for us as it is for the life force itself:

*Life forgives you when you cut your finger.
The subconscious intelligence within you sets about immediately
to repair it. New cells build bridges over the cut. . . .
Life holds no grudges against you,
and it is always forgiving you.¹⁰⁵*

Since all of us are individualized aspects of that life force (see Chapter 6, *Oneness*), we do indeed share its instinctive nature to forgive; it is simply a matter of learning to allow that higher aspect of ourselves to shine through the darkness caused by our conditioning. Granted, it can take a lot of practice on our part to learn to allow that natural instinct to express itself, but the potential payoffs (i.e., greater peace of mind, improved relationships, better health) are well worth the effort.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH FORGIVENESS

Prior to reaching my mid-thirties, I had no interest whatsoever in practicing forgiveness. Holding on to resentment and grudges was a

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*, op. cit., p. 181

way of life for me. Whenever any person did something to ‘hurt’ me I couldn’t imagine just letting it go and moving on. There were even times I went as far as choosing to inflict some form of ‘payback’ just to let them know how lousy it felt. As I think back on that time of my life, I am almost amazed that I could have behaved in such destructive and heartless ways.

As with all major transformations that take place in a person’s life, there is usually a watershed event, or a turning point if you will, that causes them to look at something in a totally different way. In my case, the attitude I held about forgiveness was altered more than a decade ago when I read the final chapter of Dr. Wayne Dyer’s book *You’ll See It When You Believe It*. Fittingly titled “Forgiveness,” that chapter contained incredibly valuable and practical information to which I had never previously been exposed.

Today, some twelve years later, I still consider the material within that chapter to be the best I have ever read on this subject, and I strongly recommend it to anyone on the path of spiritual growth. There are in my view, a number of thought-provoking passages in that chapter, but the following one is perhaps most responsible for the significant change that occurred in my attitude about forgiveness:

Follow this logic. Someone has harmed you in some way in your past. You feel hurt and angry, and that anger ultimately turns to hatred. This is your hatred. You own it. It is you and you are it. The hatred is all thought, and is with you wherever you go. You have given someone permission not only to hurt you once, but to continue controlling your inner life. The hatred infects your life while the other person is still on his or her path doing exactly what he or she knows how to do, independent of your current miserable state.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You’ll See It When You Believe It*, op. cit., p. 251 - 252

As soon as I read those words, it was immediately obvious to me that Dyer was right. By holding on to resentment and bitterness, the only person I was hurting was myself, because whoever I felt hurt me had already moved on while I remained stuck in the past. It also occurred to me just how much energy I was wasting by hanging on to old hurts, so from that moment on I made the decision to work at dropping all of that old 'baggage'. Moreover, I made a promise to myself to no longer allow new feelings of anger or resentment to gain any sort of foothold in my consciousness.

As fate would have it, this shift in attitude would really prove beneficial a few years down the road when I was a partner in a small business that ultimately failed. For the sake of simplicity, let's just say that near the end of the company's life, the relationships that existed among the partners were not the least bit harmonious. What once could have been a great success, disappointingly never materialized. The end result was that fingers of blame were being pointed in all directions, and an overall feeling of mistrust was prevalent among all parties concerned.

Despite my intention to steer clear of resentment, I too, found myself beset by feelings of blame, anger and frustration. It was a very tough situation for everyone involved, and it became even more difficult after the doors were officially closed for the final time. That was because various legal issues related to the dissolution of the business eventually arose, and they would come to affect every partner involved. When the first set of such issues emerged, I was still dealing with nagging feelings of anger about what had occurred, and the net result was that I incurred a series of very expensive legal fees.

Thankfully, in the middle of that first round of legal activity I finally came to my senses, remembering all I had learned in Dyer's chapter about forgiveness. At that point I realized it was *my* responsibility to remove any lingering anger or resentment I had toward anyone involved in that venture. As I thought more about it, I just knew there had to be a spiritual solution for this problem; some

technique I could apply to assist me in clearing out all of the negative feelings I was carrying around.

So I contacted a friend who had also been on the path of spiritual growth for some time, and she recommended that I add a forgiveness exercise to the 'quiet-time' that I was accustomed to taking on a daily basis. I was also encouraged to vividly picture each of my so-called adversaries, look them in the eye, and sincerely say, "I forgive you, and wish you nothing but peace." Recognizing the importance of leaving all of this negativity behind, I took to this exercise with fervent dedication, making it a part of my daily spiritual practice as prescribed.

Each day I completed the exercise with as much sincere *feeling* as I could, and by the time six months had elapsed, I can truthfully say I did not have a single ounce of animosity toward anyone involved in the situation. This did not mean that I wanted to see them, talk with them, or have anything at all to do with them ever again. It simply meant that I had left behind all of the negative feelings about them.

While I undertook this approach to the situation, I knew that others who were involved weren't addressing the matter in anywhere near the same way. That however, was not my concern. I simply went about living my life and had no interest whatsoever in participating in any additional conflict or negativity. Although there were still open issues to be resolved, from my perspective the matter was finished; I had in effect, already moved on. Interestingly, much later it came to my attention that a second round of legal activity had commenced, and strangely enough every single partner involved was required to participate - everyone that is, *except me*.

You might argue that it was merely a positive twist of fate, others that it was the result of human error, but they would never convince me that anything other than the sincere practice of forgiveness was responsible for what had occurred.

A HELPFUL FORGIVENESS PRAYER

During the past several years, I have had occasion to read a number of excellent spiritual growth books, and in one in particular I discovered a forgiveness prayer that both others and I have found to be very helpful. This prayer, which is printed directly below, comes from a very captivating book called *Awaken to the Healer Within*:

*From the Divine Love that flows within my Being,
I now call forth {insert name} to stand before me as
I stand before you—in Love. I ask now that you forgive me
as I forgive you. I embrace you in Love, and I thank you
for the lessons that we have shared, but I now choose
to release to the Light all bonds between us
except those of unconditional love.
I bid you to go in Peace. So be it!¹⁰⁷*

When said with sincerity, this can be a very powerful prayer, one that I have seen work miracles in a person's life. For example, a very dear friend of mine – a truly wonderful person who had, unfortunately, been physically and emotionally abused throughout his childhood, successfully used it. As he grew into adulthood, the effect of this treatment manifested as problems with substance abuse, and an overall orientation toward over-indulgent behavior. As might be expected, his relationship with his parents was rooted in judgment and negativity, and although both his mother and father clearly knew that they played a part in his dysfunction, neither was capable of accepting any responsibility for it.

During the latter part of the 1990s, this gentleman made the decision to work at overcoming his addictions, and some time after that he recognized the importance of addressing the longstanding issues with his parents as well. One day during one of our frequent

¹⁰⁷ Rich Work w/Ann Marie Groth, *Awaken to the Healer Within*, (Mosinee, WI: Asini Publishing, 1995) p. 168–169

discussions, the subject of his parents came up again, so I took the opportunity to suggest that he begin using the aforementioned prayer every morning just as he awoke. My rationale was simple: he could never truly be free of all that stored negative emotion until he undertook the effort to forgive them. Surprisingly, he agreed with me fully, and promised to begin working with the prayer as suggested.

He worked with it for several months, and as time passed, little by little the chasm that existed between him and his parents narrowed. Today, several years later, the relationship between them is better than he ever thought it could be when he first embarked on this path of forgiveness. These results plainly demonstrate the power of this forgiveness prayer. If you find that you are truly willing to fully let go of a past hurt, then I strongly recommend that you apply it in your life as well.

THEY “KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO”

As you undertake the effort to practice forgiveness in your life, it is also appropriate to take into consideration the words of Jesus as he neared his death, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” Although this statement is familiar to many, I believe that most individuals would believe instead that those who harmed them were actually *well aware* of what they were doing.

From my experiences on this path, I’ve come to believe that a person who does harm to another is simply doing what they know how to do at the time given the level of their awareness of spiritual principles, nothing more, nothing less. While it can be difficult to adopt this perspective when an individual does something that is really mean or hurtful, if you got down to the heart of the matter, you would find they were merely doing the best they could in that moment to deal with *their own* life’s issues and fears.

Think about it for a moment, and you realize that it is true; people (including you) are generally so focused on themselves and their own personal drama that they tend to be oblivious to what anyone else is going through at the time. That’s why it is important for you

not to take things personally, for people will be what people will be, and the underlying cause of their behavior actually has nothing to do with you. In that regard, consider this passage from a marvelous book called *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz:

*Personal importance, or taking things personally,
is the maximum expression of selfishness
because we make the assumption that everything is about “me.”
Nothing other people do is because of you.
It is because of themselves.
All people live in their own dream, in their own mind;
they are in a completely different world than the one we live in.
When we take something personally, we make the assumption
that they know what is in our world, and we try
to impose our world on their world. Even when a situation
seems so personal, even if others insult you directly,
it has nothing to do with you.¹⁰⁸*

When you can truly embrace this perspective, you will come to understand exactly what Jesus meant by “they know not what they do,” and you’ll also put yourself in a position where no one can ever really hurt you again. If you have any doubt that the latter can be true, then I strongly suggest that you read Ruiz’s entire book, and pay particular attention to Chapter 3, “The Second Agreement: Don’t Take Anything Personally.”

FORGIVING YOURSELF

Many of us human beings have the tendency to be much harder on ourselves than we are on anyone else. We commonly feel remorseful about things we have said or done in the past, and at times those feelings become so intense that we actually begin to condemn ourselves. From my perspective, most of the guilt and the feelings of self-condemnation we experience are a complete waste of

¹⁰⁸ Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*, (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1997) p. 48–49

energy, for what's done is truly done. The act of going back and repeatedly reliving the experience merely serves to take you out of the present moment, which as we learned in Chapter 5, is the only time that really exists in the first place.

The solution is therefore very simple: Learn to *forgive yourself* just as you forgive others, for you too were merely doing the best you knew how to do at that particular time. Equally as important, you need to develop the understanding that whatever did occur needed to happen for you to become the person you are today.

Easier said than done you might say, as self-forgiveness is not always a simple task, especially in the case of acts that caused significant pain or distress to other people. Nevertheless, if you aren't willing to release all of the resentment you feel toward yourself, how can you expect to be forgiven by whomever it is that you harmed? Moreover, without self-forgiveness, you simply cannot move forward in your spiritual growth, nor can you hope to succeed in your personal healing efforts.

To assist you in this process of forgiving yourself, I highly recommend the use of the following prayer, which I came across a few years ago. It is one that has always been of great value to me in my own efforts to release myself from past mistakes:

*Spirit of the living God within, my precious holy Self,
I totally and completely forgive myself for every thought,
feeling, word, deed of the past. I release everything to you,
all of my self-condemnation, all of my guilt, and all of my fear,
and I close the door on all that was yesterday.
As I forgive myself I know that I am forgiving all,
for I am everyone, and everyone is me,
and through the cleansing action of forgiveness
we are all wonderfully free.¹⁰⁹*

¹⁰⁹ John Randolph Price, *The Angels Within Us*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1993) p. 29

By saying this prayer each day with sincerity, I assure you that it will become increasingly easy for you to accept and approve of yourself, regardless of your past errors. So give it a try, my friend; what have you got to lose but some negative energy that can only harm you as you move forward in your life?

FORGIVENESS AND BLAME

As you continue along the path of spiritual growth, it is inevitable that you arrive at the point where you come to accept a simple but profound truth about forgiveness—that in order to forgive, you must first have assigned blame. Put another way, there is only a need to practice forgiveness when you fail to comprehend that at some level you are responsible for everything that you experience in life.

Coming to such a sophisticated level of awareness doesn't necessarily happen overnight. It is obvious that some really lousy things regularly happen to people who clearly would not have deliberately chosen to experience them. Yet as we learned in Chapter 4, literally everything that happens to us does originate from a cause that we *ourselves* put into motion through the energy signals (i.e., conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings) we are always emitting.

What is unfortunate though, is that once again people are simply not conscious of all of the signals they are giving off, nor are most aware that they always have a choice as to how they process the behavior of others. The majority of human beings have trouble accepting the idea that they are actually responsible for the people, things and circumstances that show up in their lives. If you are a part of that majority, and happen to believe that the negative conditions you encounter are primarily the fault of *others*, then you need to understand that by assigning blame you are not in any way helping yourself.

When you blame other people, you effectively put both your feelings and your state-of-mind at the mercy of someone else's behavior (e.g., I'll be happy or satisfied when they apologize, or start or stop

doing X or Y or Z, etc.). The better approach is for you to accept full responsibility for your life, adopting instead the perspective that it was *you* who attracted this negative person or situation to yourself so that you might learn a valuable lesson. It is from this position of personal power that true-life changes can occur.

To close this discussion about the principle of forgiveness, I will leave you with this additional thought-provoking passage from *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* by Lynn Grabhorn:

*[True] forgiveness is about no longer holding onto or stewing over
(focusing on) the thing that got us all riled up to begin with.
And that holds true whether it happened five minutes
or fifty years ago. Why? Because unless we let it go,
we'll keep getting more of it, that's why.
If we hold on to it, it's in our vibration.
And if it's in our vibration, we're either going to attract it,
or something similar in vibration. Over and over.¹¹⁰*

Ms. Grabhorn is correct, when you do make the choice *not* to forgive, you simply wind up storing negative energy within your consciousness, and that energy only serves to attract more of the same types of people and situations that brought pain or negativity to you in the first place. That is why it's so critical that you learn to forgive the past and completely let it go, for it *is* indeed already gone.

SUMMING IT ALL UP

The principle of forgiveness is a familiar but typically misunderstood concept, as most people tend to view it as a truly noble gesture on the part of the person doing the forgiving. The act of forgiving is actually a very selfish gesture, in that it provides you with the valuable opportunity to release toxic, negative feelings. Forgiveness essentially allows you to lighten your emotional burdens, and draws

¹¹⁰ Lynn Grabhorn, *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* op. cit., p. 212

your attention out of the past and into the present.

Forgiveness not only helps you to become healthier emotionally, it also has a positive impact on your physical health. Medical studies have confirmed that death rates from certain illnesses are higher among people in psychological distress. Holding on to resentment is just such a form of distress, because it puts you into a position where you are inadvertently storing negative energy in the very cells of your body—energy that can ultimately manifest itself as some type of illness.

While forgiveness does have a positive effect on both emotional and physical health, many people still find it very difficult to practice it. Some have this difficulty because they were conditioned to accept the Old Testament “eye-for-an-eye” mentality, others, because they believe that forgiving means condoning whatever inappropriate behavior occurred. The truth is that forgiveness does not mean that what occurred was in any way acceptable, it merely means releasing the negative feelings you have regarding the matter.

Although many believe that practicing forgiveness is nearly impossible in some instances, there is nothing that cannot be forgiven once you come to understand that forgiving is all about letting go of the toxic thoughts and emotions within *you*.

Though the media tends to almost deify individuals who choose to forgive the perpetrator of a violent act for instance, all of us have the potential to act in the same way. Just as the life force itself forgives you every time you hurt yourself, as an individual aspect of that Divine consciousness you too have within you the same potential to be forgiving.

When you hold on to resentment, the only person you are really hurting is yourself. This is because typically the one who ‘hurt’ you has already left the matter behind while you remain mired in the past. There is a spiritual solution to this problem, and that is to make it a daily practice to call that person into your consciousness, and extend forgiveness to them until all of your feelings of resentment dissolve. To assist you in this process, a helpful forgiveness

prayer was provided in the text of this chapter.

This chapter also pointed out the importance of remembering the words of Jesus as he neared his death: “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” While many may feel that people are aware of what they are doing, the reality is that all individuals are simply doing the best they know how to do at any particular time, given the level of their awareness of spiritual principles.

People are usually so focused on their own life that they are, for the most part, unaware of what anyone else is experiencing at the time. For this reason, it is vital that you learn not to take things personally, for other people live in their own dream, in their own mind, and therefore are in a completely different world than the one in which you live.

In addition to forgiving others, it is crucial that you learn to forgive yourself as well. No matter how poorly you may have behaved, whatever you have done in the past is over, and simply put, you would not be the person you are today without that experience. Like everyone else, you were simply doing the best you knew how to do at the time, so release any feelings of self-condemnation. To assist you in this process, a helpful prayer for self-forgiveness was provided in the text of this chapter.

As you proceed in your spiritual growth, you will eventually reach the point where you come to understand a simple but powerful truth about forgiveness—that in order to forgive, you must have first assigned blame. Once you do accept that at some level you do attract (or create) everything that you experience in your life, there is no longer any need to forgive anyone.

Reaching this level of awareness takes time, of course, for some nasty things can happen to you that you certainly would not have consciously chosen. Yet we know from Chapter 4 that the real reason you experience negative ‘surprises’ in your life is that you are not always conscious of the signals (i.e., thoughts, feelings) you are sending out into the world.

If you are unable to accept this premise, then understand that whenever you blame, you only weaken yourself. Why? Because you put yourself into a position where both your feelings and your state-of-mind are always at the mercy of someone else's behavior.

It is therefore far better to accept complete responsibility for your life, and acknowledge that whatever circumstances you encounter contain within them a valuable lesson that you most definitely need to learn.

Related Reading

Eric Butterworth, *Discover the Power Within You*: Chapter 12

Deepak Chopra, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*: Part One

Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*: Chapter 1

Caroline Myss, *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*: Chapter 1

Caroline Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit*: Chapter 4

Dr. Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*: Chapter 17

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*: Chapter 7

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*: Chapter 3

Lynn Grabhorn, *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting*: Chapter Nine

This ends our discussion about spiritual principles. The next and final chapter of *Spirituality Simplified*, which is called "The Path of Spiritual Growth," features an assortment of information designed to help you in your efforts to grow spiritually, including a discussion about a group of self-help techniques that I have found to be very valuable in my own spiritual development.