



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

CONTRIBUTED BY: *Michael Smith from Oregon*

Connections through the power of forgiveness.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: Be sure to visit our website and fill out the Pre-Experiment Survey!

TAKE SURVEY

1 WHO TO FORGIVE

The chances are that we all likely have opportunities to forgive. For some, that may be forgiving a family member, a friend, or a difficult situation. For many, that forgiveness may need to be turned inward. As you work to strengthen connections through forgiveness, start by writing out a list of those individuals or situations which you desire or feel a need to forgive. Refer to this list throughout the duration of this experiment.

"Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." Corrie Ten Boom

2 HOW TO FORGIVE

For many of us, forgiveness sounds like a good idea but we may not exactly know how to approach the forgiveness process. Spend some time today learning about processes that others have proposed on how to forgive and let go of hurt.

[REACH Process](#) - Everett Worthington, PhD,
[Forgiveness Workbooks](#) - Fred Luskin, PhD,
[Learning To Forgive, 9 Steps](#)

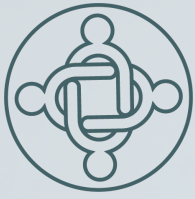
"Be the one who nurtures and builds. Be the one who has an understanding and a forgiving heart one who looks for the best in people. Leave people better than you found them." Marvin J. Ashton

3 FORGIVE YOURSELF

This is the first of several days in which your efforts will be focused on, simply, forgiving. Take time to ponder, to write, to pray, and to reconcile first with yourself. What do you feel is your biggest weakness? Do you feel that you don't "measure up" in some way? Identify those things and forgive yourself.

One way that you might start doing this is a "junk journal." This can be whatever format you want – a sheet of paper, a notebook, or a blank word processing file on your computer. Take time and write down things that are hard, your raw, unfiltered emotions and thoughts, and anything else that comes to mind. After you are done processing those feelings and thoughts, take that piece of paper, rip it up, and throw it away. Delete the computer file. Allow the writing, the ripping, and the deleting to be a chance to let go.

"Forgiving yourself, believing in yourself and choosing to love yourself are the best gifts one could receive." Brittany Burgunder



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

PAGE TWO

4 LEARN EMPATHY

You may find it easier to forgive someone if you have greater empathy for them.

“Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the wrong. Sometime in life you will have been all of these.” - George Washington Carver

As a tactile exercise in empathy, try to literally stand in someone else’s shoes. That may not be physically possible so you can do the next best thing. Trace the shape of your shoes or your feet on a piece of paper and cut them out. Write on the “feet” the name of someone that you feel that you need to forgive. Place them on the ground and stand on those paper feet. Close your eyes. Visualize that person, their potential challenges and struggles, their life story to that point, how they may have felt, their dreams and hopes, their parents who loved them, other family members they may have had, and so on. Pray to understand them. Pray to love them.

5 FORGIVE YOUR CHILDHOOD

Many of us may recall our childhood with fondness. Days of innocence with few cares other than going to school and playing with friends. But for some, those childhood days may have been difficult, hurtful, and painful. Take time to let go of those struggles, that pain, that hurt from the earliest days of your memory. Find the inner child inside of you. Allow yourself to, figuratively, go back in time and let that child be healed.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

“To be wronged is nothing, unless you continue to remember it.” - Confucius

6 MUSIC AND FORGIVENESS

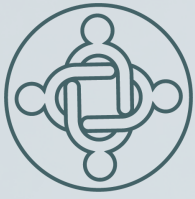
Music can have profound power to help heal. Go through your music library or online music collections and identify a song that strengthens your ability to forgive, to let go, and find healing.

*“Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens.”
Maria von Trapp*

7 FORGIVE YOUR TEEN YEARS

Maybe it was that time when you were rejected by a friend group at school, not being asked by that special someone to a dance, having your heart broken after a young romance, or something more personal. Those formative years of our adolescence were times of growing, exploration, and, sometimes, pain. Acknowledge those memories and let them go.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

PAGE THREE

8

FORGIVENESS IS A GIFT

In his [REACH model of forgiveness](#), Everett Worthington writes that forgiveness is an altruistic gift to someone else. He said, “Give forgiveness as an unselfish, altruistic gift. We all can remember when we wronged someone—maybe a parent, teacher, or friend—and the person forgave us. We felt light and free. And we didn’t want to disappoint that person by doing wrong again. By forgiving unselfishly, you can give that same gift to someone who hurt you.”

Today, give a gift. It can be to anyone, but you may find it most meaningful to someone that you need to forgive. It could be as simple as a text message, a plate of cookies, or something dressed in wrapping paper and a bow. If none of those resonate with you, practice giving the gift of forgiveness. You may reflect on the most meaningful intangible gift you have ever given or received, or that you could give or receive. In many ways, forgiveness is the ultimate intangible gift. No grocery stores or online ordering needed.

9

FORGIVE A PLACE

Being a fairly nomadic society, many of us will move around throughout our lifetimes. Sometimes, those cities and towns we call home will be strengthening and nourishing. Other times, that strengthening may come in the form of trials and challenges. Maybe it was there that you had a difficult time at work, that you struggled getting along with your neighbors, that you went through one of many possible personal or family trials, or something else. Take time today to forgive that place, those situations, and those experiences.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

10

A LETTER NOT SENT

There are many ways of saying, “I forgive you.” This may look like an in-person conversation, a phone call, or a text message. Today, write a letter. Direct it to a person, an event, or a situation which you need to forgive. Write down why and how you were hurt, your feelings, your emotions. Write about how you forgive, even though that individual or situation may not change. Just write: pure, genuine, and unfiltered.

When you are done, don’t get an envelope and postage stamp; that is unless you want to. You may find great relief in sending that letter or card and letting the postal service carry your forgiveness to someone else. But you may find just as much relief writing your feelings down and letting them go unsent. Like a junk journal, maybe you rip up and throw away the letter. You might save it in the future for when you are ready to add that envelope and stamp. But sent or unsent, write the words, “I forgive you.” Let those words heal your heart.

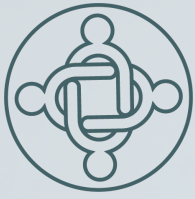
“Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you are.” Cherie Carter-Scott

11

SERVE TO FORGIVE

Service is one of the best gifts that we can give to others. Take time today to serve someone that offended or hurt you in the past. Be open and creative. Notice how your ability to forgive them grows as you serve them.

“Life is for service.” Fred Rogers



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

PAGE FOUR

12 FORGIVE YOUR PARENTS

"Of all the people that we need to forgive, our parents are likely on the top of our list. In his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde said, "Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older they judge them; sometimes they forgive them." We have the opportunity, today and every day, to turn our judgement into forgiveness. Even if it has been many years since we left our parents' nest, we can take time to recognize their love, hard work, providing, patience, and so much more, even despite their imperfections, weaknesses, and inadequacies.

If you are now a parent, you might recognize your own imperfections even as you raise or have raised your children. Yet, despite those imperfections, your young children still love you and want you to be your best self. Thinking about that childhood love, your inner child still has the capability of giving that love. Whether we are 5 or 55, forgiveness can turn that adult-like judgement back into child-like love. Let that love permeate your efforts to take time and forgive your parents today. Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

Recommended reading: [It Didn't Start with You](#), by Mark Wolynn.

13 FORGIVENESS MOVIE

Cozy up with a good blanket, your favorite drink, popcorn, and a good movie about forgiveness. What do you learn from others about how they forgave?

Some ideas of shows to get you thinking:

- Coco
- Moana
- Just Let Go
- Forever Strong
- I Can Only Imagine
- Joseph, King of Dreams
- Cinderella (Disney 2015 live-action remake)
- Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

14 FORGIVE THE GRAND-PARENTS

"Going to grandma's house is supposed to always be fun, right? While many memories with our grandparents may be as sweet as the candy they always had for us, there may be some sour patches among those memories. Whatever the reason, take time to forgive and experience healing across multiple generations.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive."

"To Err is Human, To Forgive, Divine." Alexander Pope, *An Essay On Criticism*



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

PAGE FIVE

15 FORGIVE A SIBLING

"For the first many years of our lives, our siblings can be our best friends. They also know us the best, including knowing how to burst our balloons or pop our bubbles. Events from our younger or not-so-younger years may have left more balloons burst than we would like. Although broken balloons can't be mended back together again, new balloons of a relationship can be blown up, bringing vitality and joy.

In forgiving a sibling or other close family member today, consider blowing up a balloon, taking a permanent marker and writing on the balloon all the things that are difficult or hard, painful memories, or challenges with you and that individual. Then take a needle or sharp object and burst that balloon, allowing those painful memories to dissipate away. Let it go. Be at peace.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

16 FORGIVENESS SCRIPTURES

Take time to read and study scriptures from your religious tradition about forgiveness.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. -Matthew 6:9-13

17 FORGIVE OUTSIDE YOUR FAMILY

"The thread of our life's experience is interwoven with hundreds of others. Many times, those threads run beautifully and create exquisite patterns in the tapestry of life. Other times, knots appear with our thread and that of another. Whether it is a friend, a peer, coworker, supervisor, fellow church member, or even a stranger, take time today to untangle knots that you have identified.

Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

"Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." Oscar Wilde

18 FORGIVE AN ANCESTOR

"Whether they lived 50 years ago or 200 years ago, the choices or actions of our ancestors of our ancestors can still impact us today. It even could have been something as simple as a seemingly premature death that prevented us from getting to know them.

Find a picture of an ancestor that you need to forgive. Print it out and keep it visible throughout the day. As you are able, spend time learning about them, their life's story, what they did for work, their family, their interests, their dreams. Strengthening your relationship with that ancestor, even though they are deceased, will open the door to greater love and greater forgiveness. The past may not be able to be repaired, but it can be healed. Ponder. Write. Pray. Forgive.

"Letting go means to come to the realization that some people are a part of your history, but not a part of your destiny." Steve Maraboli



FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS PLAN

PAGE SIX

19 BALLOON RELEASE

Obtain a helium balloon from a dollar store or party store. Write on a piece of paper feelings, grudges, and other things that you want to let go of. Tie that piece of paper to the balloon and, when you are ready, release that balloon and let it fly away. As it flies away, let your burdens, grudges, and other feelings fly away as well.

"Forgiveness is God's Greatest Gift", Dan Brown, The Da Vinci Code

20 LAYERS AND REPEATS

Today, enjoy a food with layers. Bake a layered cake, lasagna, a parfait, trifles, onions, plain lettuce or cabbage, seven-layer dip,... you get the idea. Reflect on how there may be "layers" to your forgiveness efforts. Do you need to forgive someone again, and again, and again? How does your forgiveness change time after time? How do you change as you forgive time after time? Is there someone you need to forgive again?

Then came Peter to [Jesus], and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:21-22

21 REFLECT

Take time today to reflect on your forgiveness journey. How do you feel now compared to when you started 21 days ago? How are you a different person? How have you changed? Who do you still need to forgive? How do you want to keep forgiving others into the future?

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."
- Lewis B. Smedes

WHEN YOU'RE DONE: Be sure to visit our website and fill out the Post-Experiment Survey!

TAKE SURVEY

plan author

MICHAEL SMITH

 @familyhistoryeveryday

 @familyhistoryeveryday

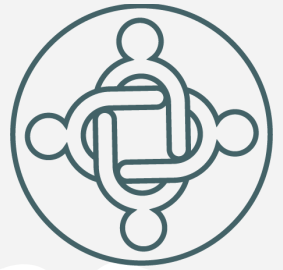
 michaelbriansmith1@gmail.com



Share your progress with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), or [TikTok](#) using the hashtag #21DayExperiment

FORGIVING OUR CONNECTIONS

CONTRIBUTED BY: MICHAEL SMITH, Oregon, U.S.



DAY 1

☐

Who to Forgive

DAY 12

☐

Forgive Your Parents

DAY 2

☐

How to Forgive

DAY 13

☐

Forgiveness Movie

DAY 3

☐

Forgive Yourself

DAY 14

☐

Forgive the Grandparents

DAY 4

☐

Learn Empathy

DAY 15

☐

Forgive a Sibling

DAY 5

☐

Forgive Your Childhood

DAY 16

☐

Forgiveness Scriptures

DAY 6

☐

Music & Forgiveness

DAY 17

☐

Forgive Outside Your Family

DAY 7

☐

Forgive Your Teen Years

DAY 18

☐

Forgive An Ancestor

DAY 8

☐

Forgiveness is a Gift

DAY 19

☐

Balloon Release

DAY 9

☐

Forgive a Place

DAY 20

☐

Layers & Repeats

DAY 10

☐

A Letter Not Sent

DAY 21

☐

Reflect

DAY 11

☐

Serve to Forgive