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Loving and forgiving yourself

If you are, as most people, your own worst critic, you hold so much self-judgement that it makes you feel unworthy of unconditional love or self-acceptance. Therefore, the shortest way to self-love leads through self-forgiveness. Many people tend to blame themselves for the past choices and (re)actions. If you do too, please know that there is no need for that because you evolve with time and your past choices were the best you could think of back then. You can now forgive yourself for not having known better in all those past situations. Had you known better, you would have chosen differently, used different words and acted in a different way. Forgiving yourself frees a lot of energy and allows you to accept and love yourself more. Once you have chosen to allow self-forgiveness into your life, all things will start falling into place and you'll witness yourself to first make a step that will lead you to more self-love and self-acceptance. If you try to love yourself but hold grudges against yourself, you will not be able to embrace yourself completely. I forgive myself for having made all the mistakes. Had I known better, I would have chosen differently. So I forgive myself. Making peace and moving forward is often easier said than done. Being able to forgive yourself requires empathy, compassion, kindness, and understanding. It also requires you to accept that forgiveness is a choice. Whether you're trying to work through a minor mistake or one that impacts all areas of your life, the steps you need to take in order to forgive yourself will look and feel the same. All of us make mistakes at times. As humans, we're imperfect. The trick, says Arlene B. Englander, LCSW, MBA, PA is to learn and move on from our mistakes. As painful and uncomfortable as it may feel, there are things in life that are worth enduring the pain for in order to move forward, and forgiving yourself is one of them. Here are 12 tips you can try the next time you want to forgive yourself. One of the first steps in learning how to forgive yourself is to focus on your emotions. Before you can move forward, you need to acknowledge and process your emotions. Give yourself permission to recognize and accept the feelings that have been triggered in you and welcome them. If you make a mistake and continue to struggle with letting it go, acknowledge out loud what you learned from the mistake, says Jordan Pickell, MCP, RCC. When you give a voice to the thoughts in your head and the emotions in your heart, you may free yourself from some of the burdens. You also imprint in your mind what you learned from your actions and consequences. Englander says to think of each "mistake" as a learning experience that holds the key to moving forward faster and more consistently in the future. Reminding ourselves that we did the best we could with the tools and knowledge we had at the time, will help us forgive ourselves and move forward. If you make a mistake but have a hard time putting it out of your mind, Pickell says to visualize your thoughts and feelings about the mistake going into a container, such as a mason jar or box. Then, tell yourself you are putting this aside for now and will return to it if and when it will benefit you. Journaling can help you understand your inner critic and develop self-compassion. Pickell says one thing you can do is write out a "conversation" between you and your inner critic. This can help you identify thought patterns that are sabotaging your ability to forgive yourself. You can also use journaling time to make a list of the qualities you like about yourself, including your strengths and skills. This can help boost your self-confidence when you're feeling down about a mistake you made. We are our own worst critics, right? That's why Pickell says one important action tip is to notice when that harsh voice comes in and then write it down. You might be surprised by what your inner critic actually says to you. Sometimes it can be difficult to recognize the thoughts that are getting in the way of forgiveness. If you're struggling to sort out your inner critic, Pickell suggests this exercise: On one side of a piece of paper, write down what your inner critic says (which tends to be critical and irrational). On the other side of the paper, write a self-compassionate and rational response for each thing you wrote on the other side of the paper. If the mistake you made hurt another person, you need to determine the best course of action. Do you want to talk to this person and apologize? Is it important to reconcile with them and make amends? If you're on the fence about what to do, you might want to consider making amends. This goes beyond saying sorry to a person you've hurt. Instead, try to fix the mistake you've made. One study found that forgiving ourselves for hurting another is easier if we first make amends. Oftentimes, it's easier to tell someone else what to do than to take our own advice. Licensed marriage and family therapist, Heidi McBain, LMFT, LPT, RPT says to ask yourself what you would tell your best friend if they were sharing this mistake they made with you, and then take your own advice. If you're having a difficult time working through this in your head, it can help to role-play with your friend. Ask them to take on your mistake. They will tell you what happened and how they are struggling to forgive themselves. You get to be the advice giver and practice telling your friend how to move on. It's human nature to spend time and energy replaying our mistakes. While some processing is important, going over what happened again and again won't allow you to take the proper steps to forgive yourself. When you catch yourself playing the "I'm a horrible person" tape, stop yourself and focus on one positive action step. For example, instead of replaying the tape, take three deep breaths or go for a walk. Interrupting the thought pattern can help you move away from the negative experience and reduce stress and anxiety. If your first response to a negative situation is to criticize yourself, it's time to show yourself some kindness and compassion. The only way to begin the journey to forgiveness is to be kind and compassionate with yourself. This takes time, patience, and a reminder to yourself that you're worthy of forgiveness. If you're struggling to forgive yourself, you may benefit from talking to a professional. McBain recommends talking to a counselor who can help you learn how to break these unhealthy patterns in your life and learn new and healthier ways of coping with mistakes. Forgiveness is important to the healing process since it allows you to let go of the anger, guilt, shame, sadness, or any other feeling you may be experiencing, and move on. Once you identify what you're feeling, give a voice to it and accept that mistakes are inevitable. You'll begin to see how freeing forgiveness can be. Most of us are very hard on ourselves. We're quick to judge ourselves, we easily criticize ourselves, and this makes it more difficult to forgive ourselves. However, forgiveness is necessary and it's an important part of a self-care practice. I once heard that until you forgive, you will keep giving your past to the future. I couldn't agree more! Forgiving yourself shifts who you are in the present, enabling you to create a different future. But, how do you do it? Here's a few tips to help you get started! Remember: You're always doing the best you can ~ It's natural to mess up, fail, or make mistakes. Guess what? It's part of the human experience. And guess what else? It serves you! These are the things in life that serve as your most important lessons. They help you learn, grow, and become better. You are not the mistake ~ It's important to know that you are not the mistake. The action that you took was the mistake. You are separate from it, which means you have the power to choose a different action next time. Forgiveness comes so much easier when you can separate yourself from the action. Ways to Forgive Yourself: Affirm Forgiveness ~ One way to begin the forgiveness process is to look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I forgive myself for _____." Continue to repeat this affirming statement until you believe it. How do you know when you believe it? I always know because I feel a shift inside. I can feel the weight and burden of whatever I haven't forgiven myself for being lifted from my body. When this happens, I know I've moved into forgiving myself. Note: This may require more than one session and that's OK. Journal ~ Journaling is a powerful healing tool. Writing out your feelings of embarrassment, guilt, or shame helps to give those feelings another place to live, the pages of your journal. They're no longer stuck inside you, brewing, causing blocks that hinder you from your growth and well-being. For more benefits of journaling, click here. Love Yourself ~ One of the reasons why we forgive others more easily than we do ourselves is because we're more critical and judging of ourselves than we are of others. When someone that we love hurts us, it's often easier to forgive them because the love we feel for them allows us to be willing to see it as one-time incident or perhaps as something that wasn't meant to hurt us. When you love yourself unconditionally, the way you do those in your life, you'll forgive yourself more easily. If you aren't in a loving relationship with yourself, you'll naturally be more critical and less forgiving of yourself. To learn more about loving yourself, check out these blogs: The Importance of Self-Love Learning to Love Myself Forgiving Yourself helps you to grow and heal. It helps you to live healthier, happier, and feel more fulfilled. "Forgiveness is an act of self-love. When you forgive yourself, self-acceptance begins and self-love grows." - Miguel Ruiz If you love this blog, I'd greatly appreciate you sharing it so that others can benefit from reading it as well. Thank you. Want to live your life feeling happier, healthier, and more fulfilled? Click here to learn more about my Mentoring Program and book your FREE consultation today! Or check out my E-course, there's a forgiveness meditation included!

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