

Flushing

When someone hurts or harms you in some way it is much like having something thrown at you that belongs in a toilet. You've got three choices what to do with it. (1) Pick it up and throw it back - have a fight with it - get it all over yourself - wear it and wonder why life stinks. (2) Pick it up and smear it all over yourself - wallow in it - wear it and wonder why life stinks. (3) Put it where it goes and flush. Don't wear it and don't stink!

If you don't know how to flush or simply chose not to, in time you've got quite a problem. Life becomes like a house flooded with six inches of raw sewage. Spend all the money you want redecorating and paint the walls any color you like, but it won't matter. You can't get past the smell!

Unless you get rid of the raw sewage that life has thrown your way (release resentments, heal hurts, and dump disappointments), it won't matter where you go, what you do, who you're with, what you have - the stink never goes away. Before you "redecorate" life (change how you think, feel, choose, etc.), get rid of the sewage.

Why You Do Not Forgive

- You don't know how.
- You don't feel like it and don't want to.
- The person who hurt you does not deserve it or has not earned it.
- You don't believe anything will really change.
- If you forgive you can no longer justify your actions.
- You will have no ammunition for the next conflict.
- Playing the "blame game" requires change for others but not for you.
- You believe that forgiveness is an emotion to feel.
- You believe that you are keeping the one who hurt you in "emotional jail" - punishing them until justice is served.

Why You Choose To Forgive

- You learn how.
- You don't wait until you feel like it.
- You realize the person who hurt you will never truly deserve it or earn it because you will always remember.
- You don't settle for the way things are. As someone once said, "No one can go back and make a brand new start, my friend, but anyone can start from here and make a brand new end!"
- You stop justifying your actions. You no longer allow the actions of others to determine how you live.
- You declare a "cease fire" for the next conflict, regardless of what others do.
- You learn that, with the "blame game", the only winning move is not to play that game.
- You understand that forgiveness is a decision you make, not an emotion you feel.
- You realize that the one who hurt you is not in "emotional jail" - you are! They have gone on and you're holding yourself hostage - where is the justice in that?

Releasing resentments, healing hurts, and dumping disappointments is for you, not those who sinned against you. You are not letting them go free, you are letting yourself go free! They may never admit their sin, ask for forgiveness, seek to make things right, or change. It doesn't matter because this isn't for them anyway!

The best illustration of this principle I have heard is a true story. A woman was abducted, raped, robbed, shot and left for dead. When the abductor shot her he put a gun to her head intending instant death. She jerked at the last moment. The bullet went sideways. He ran off and was never found. She survived the attack and endured months of surgeries and rehab. She was interviewed by a reporter about three to four years after the attack. In the middle of the interview the reporter commented how she must really hate the man that put her through all this. Her response was, "I once did, but not any more." When the reporter asked for an explanation she replied, "For a long time I was consumed with revenge and justice. I wanted him caught. I wanted him to endure all the pain and suffering he had inflicted on me. I could think of nothing else. Then one day it occurred to me. That man robbed me of one night in my life. I decided I was not going to give him one more day!"

Wow! That's it! When you continue to wear what someone else has thrown your way, you're letting them reach from the past into your present and control your future. It's time to get past the past. It's time for life to smell better. It's time to flush! Some of the strongholds the enemy has in place are connected to resentments, hurts, and disappointments. Let's get rid of them by having what I call "emotional funerals".

1. Ask yourself, "Is there anyone, living or dead, that I feel owes me something? Am I holding a grudge or bitterness against someone? Do I carry disappointment with me? Is there anyone, living or dead, who hurt me or harmed me and I'm wearing that hurt?"
2. On a pad of paper make a list of the names God brings to mind. Don't be surprised if your name is on the list. You may be carrying guilt or shame for something you allowed. Don't be surprised if God's name is on the list. You may be confused, angry, or hurt that God allowed bad things to happen to you or someone you love. After five to ten minutes, you will have a list.
3. Tear off that page and set it aside. Start with any name on your list and put that name at the top of a clean sheet of paper. Then ask God to show you what it is about this person that you need to release."
4. Write down everything that comes to mind. This is not a novel, so you need not start at the beginning of the relationship and work forward. One thought will connect to another. Write what comes. Use words, phrases, paragraphs, symbols – however you want to do this. This is for no one's eyes but yours, so be brutally honest. Hold nothing back.

5. Some of what you write will be connected to other people on your list. Just make a note by their name; you will add this to their list later. Keep on task with one person at a time.
6. This is pretty emotional stuff, so you will need to take an occasional break. Take a walk, blow your nose, hit a pillow, get a drink - but stay with it until you feel like you are done.
7. What you're going to do next may seem silly or stupid. Do it anyway. This is a very important step. Make sure you are alone and no one can hear you. Imagine the person you've been writing about is sitting in a chair close by. You need to stand, so you can walk around. I want you to see yourself as a judge. What you have written is a list of indictments against that person. As judge, read out loud everything you've written; with whatever emotions you feel; using whatever words and volume you need to use. This is "no holds barred", "up close and personal", "in the face", "full force"! Don't be "Christian" or "appropriate". Let 'em have it! Include any additional things that come to mind. Say exactly what you feel.
8. Some of what you've written only needs to be said once. Some of what you've written needs to be said more than once. Say what you've written until it no longer needs to be said - a hundred times if necessary. One of the reasons you've been carrying this stuff is because it needed to be **said**, and you needed to **hear yourself say it** - without debate, rebuttal, excuse, or explanations from the one who hurt you.
9. When you get to the last word on the last page, having expressed all the emotions you needed to express, as judge, declare out loud, "Guilty as charged!"
10. Then, as judge, declare out loud, "Case dismissed!"
11. Next, pray, "God, I do not feel like dismissing this (because you don't!), but I don't want to be controlled by this any longer. I choose to forgive and release it to you. I choose to "flush". Now, help me walk away from how I feel and enjoy the sweet smell of freedom! Amen."
12. Destroy what you've written as a physical representation to yourself that the case has been dismissed. Dig a hole and bury it, burn it, shred it, whatever feels good. One person I helped said when they were finished with everyone on their list, in addition to destroying what they had written, they wrote each name on an individual sheet of toilet paper and flushed each one. What a great idea!
13. Repeat this process until you have had an "emotional funeral" for everyone on your list. Don't stop until you have flushed everything. One inch of raw sewage is better than six inches, but the house still stinks!

Questions Concerning Forgiveness

1. Once I've forgiven the ones who hurt me, do I need to confront them?

No. This is for you, not them. If a relationship also needs to be reconciled, confrontation may be necessary later, but not now. Focus on living free from the pain of your past. Reconciliation is best accomplished when you are emotionally free.

2. Do I go and ask forgiveness?

No. We have been talking about how you were hurt by someone else. If you have hurt someone, that is another matter.

3. I can forgive, but I can't forget. Is that OK?

Yes. In fact, you should not forget. If you forget, then everyday is like the movie Groundhog Day. You are doomed to keep repeating the same things over and over. You want to remember. Remembering is insulation to protect you and keep you from "going there" again.

4. If I do not forget, then how can I get past the hurtful memories?

Our senses "trigger" emotions that are connected to memories. All you need do is see, hear, taste, touch, or smell something that reminds you of a hurt and immediately you "feel" the hurt again.

For example, a young lady was seeking to get past a sexual assault. Her progress took a step back when she attended a reunion and hugged an old friend. Memories of her assault shot through her with the hug. He was not the abuser – but he did wear the same cologne the abuser wore. The smell of the cologne triggered the hurtful memories.

Each day you encounter triggers, many of which are subconscious. After you have released resentments you must determine to defuse them.

5. How do I defuse the triggers?

You can defuse triggers only after you have had your emotional funerals. After your funerals:

- Pre-decide on two or three things you would want to spend time thinking about, rather than the hurtful memories - a trip you're looking forward to taking, something you enjoy doing, etc.
- When something triggers a hurtful memory that you have already released, tell yourself the truth. Yes, that happened. Yes, that hurt.

Yes, guilty as charged, **but** case dismissed. God has that now, not me, and I'd rather think about one of the things I've pre-decided on instead. This is called the principle of replacement. You are not trying to ignore what happened or play like it never occurred. It did happen. But because you have **chosen** to release to God how you felt, now you can **choose** to think about something you would like to think about rather than the hurtful memories.

- Each time you do this you will cut in half the power of that particular trigger and diminish it's ability to control you.
- If you pay attention to the triggers and purpose to take away their power, gradually you will put distance between you and the hurtful memories until you remember the occurrence, but no longer are controlled by the pain.

It is as if the hurtful memories are King Kong standing over you - with bad breath! The good news is you can get in your car and drive away. King Kong's feet are in concrete and he can't chase you. The bad news is your car's going about two miles an hour. However, as you continue to drive away, King Kong's size reduces in the rear view mirror. He never disappears over the horizon (you never forget), but he is no longer huge and foreboding.

If you practice daily the principle of replacement after the emotional funerals, you will experience God's freedom from the control of hurtful memories.

6. This helps me with the past, but how do I get rid of new hurts? How do I "flush" daily?

When hit with a hurt, the initial response is to react. This is true of physical pain (like stumping your toe), and this is true of emotional pain (like experiencing rejection). Although reacting to pain is a natural response, actions, not reactions, are necessary to heal the hurt. You need a way to get the emotions "out of your face" (reaction), so you can see what happened and determine what you can do to change how you feel (action). Here's a way to move from reactions to actions.

- The natural emotions you feel are the result of a want, need, or expectation not being fulfilled by people, places, and things in your life. For example, you wanted your friends to understand how you felt, but they did not. You needed a nice quiet evening at home, but it did not happen. You expected the new car to be better than the old one, but it was worse.
- How you feel about what happened needs to be expressed. Feelings are best expressed when you combine four ingredients - physical, verbal, private, and appropriate.

Let me give you a bad example of what I mean. You do something that makes me very angry. I grab a glass vase and smash it on the floor in front of you while telling you how I feel. That was physical - I threw something; it was verbal - I said how I felt; but it was not private - I did it in front of you; and what I did was not appropriate - I just broke something!

However, I could go for a ten minute walk (physical); by myself (private); say under my breath what I'd really like to say to you (verbal); and that's an OK thing to do (appropriate).

There are many appropriate physical activities you can do while expressing your emotions in private: housework, yard work, exercise, driving (as long as your foot is not heavy on the accelerator!), etc. Like the emotional funerals, what happened needs to be said. You may be able to flush how you feel in ten minutes. It may take ten hours, or even ten days, but say it aloud until it does not need saying anymore.

- Once the initial emotions are “out of your face,” you can focus on, rather than react to, what happened - the wants, needs, and expectations not being fulfilled.
- Determine what you can do to change how you feel. Sometimes all you are able to do is choose not to be controlled by the actions of others.
- Decide what is needed to change things. Do you need information, patience, an explanation, confrontation, etc.?
- Then take action. Attack the problem, not the person.