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Forgiveness Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Why Forgive?

Forgiveness means creating a new story about what happened – a story that is peaceful and self-empowering.

Forgiveness is a daily choice you consciously make to release your suffering.

Forgiveness allows you to take back control and release any negative emotions and thoughts that have kept you chained to the painful incident or toxic person.

However, forgiveness does not mean you're condoning the wrong that was committed or that you're releasing the person from blame.

Forgiveness does not invalidate the pain you endured, nor does it mean that you're allowing the other person to treat you poorly again.

You can still choose to release a hurtful incident while setting boundaries with the person who hurt you or even cutting them off from your life.

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., American activist

Increase Self-Awareness

1. Become aware of your reaction when someone hurt you. How would you react if someone accidentally stepped on your feet, for example?

2. Now think about how you might react if you stepped on someone's feet:

3. What healing effect will forgiveness have on your life?

Do a Forgiveness Inventory

Examine different areas of your life and make a list of all the people you need to forgive (parents, siblings, other family members, friends, former partners, coworkers, employers, government, etc) and the things you need to forgive them for.

You may also include yourself in this list.

Identify Your Grievance

1. Select one person from your list and describe your grievance in detail. Describe what happened and your thoughts and feelings about it.

Be as honest as you can when expressing how you think of what happened and how it has caused you to suffer. Don't censor yourself.

The person you want to forgive: _____

Describe your grievance:

Forgiveness Scale

Reflect on the following questions and rate each and circle the number that best describes where you are in the process of forgiveness.

Come back every now and then to the scale and reevaluate how far you've come:

1. How clear is your understanding of the concept of forgiveness?

Not clear at all								Very Clear	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. How willing are you to forgive?

Not willing at all								Very willing	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. How much emotional pain are you experiencing because of what happened?

Not much								A lot	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. How often do you think about hurting or getting even with the person who hurt you?

Never								Very often	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Can you see ways in which you are subtly fueling your pain?

Not at all									Very much
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. Are you willing to consider other aspects of the situation that needed to be forgiven?

Not willing at all									Very willing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. Are you willing to shift your focus from yourself to the other person who needs forgiveness and consider their own perspective?

Not willing at all									Very willing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8. How able were you to make your pain meaningful?

Not at all									Very meaningful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Notes

Exploring Your Grievance

Try to deconstruct the story you tell yourself about your grievance.

Answer the following questions:

- What aspects of the story have you taken personally?

- Do you blame someone else for how you feel?

- Do you see yourself as a victim?

- How is not forgiving affecting you and your life? When you think about the hurtful incident, is your blood pressure raising? Is your heart pounding a little faster? Are you experiencing painful emotions? Are you experiencing negative self-talk?

Face Your Painful Emotions

All emotions are essential to our well-being and serve a purpose. They give us important feedback about what is happening around us.

- What is it that your emotions are trying to tell you about yourself and what happened?

- How can you use that information to take appropriate action?

Consider the Impact of Your Grievance Story

1. How does your grievance story affect various aspects of your life experience? What is it costing you (emotionally, physically, spiritually, socially)? What do you gain from keeping the old story? What benefits do you get if you're to let go of it?

Fill in the table below and rate each item based on its importance on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being not important and 5 being very important):

The person you have not forgiven_____			
Costs of not forgiving	<i>Score</i>	Benefits of forgiving	<i>Score</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>Total</i>	

Find the Gift

Although this view may be controversial, especially for people who experienced great trauma, shifting your perspective can offer great healing and personal growth.

- What did you learn from this experience? How can you give meaning to your pain?

- What positive intention did you or the other person have at the beginning of the situation?

Create a New, Empowering Story

Template for Writing New Story

Start with a description of what happened then answer the following prompts:

Because of this, I felt _____

Because of what happened I believed _____

I now realize that _____

I have now learned from this that _____

This experience has enabled me to _____

I commit to _____

I have forgiven X for _____

I have forgiven myself for _____

I am grateful for _____

Forgiveness Affirmations

- ☐ I have the courage to heal.
- ☐ I forgive for my own sake.
- ☐ It is okay to let the anger go.
- ☐ I take this small step toward growth.
- ☐ I am open to life and all it holds.
- ☐ I own my feelings and am willing to experience them.
- ☐ I choose to see this in a different light.
- ☐ I will choose life.
- ☐ I will show up for my life today.
- ☐ I forgive to free myself.
- ☐ My life is for me to enjoy.
- ☐ I choose to let go and move on.
- ☐ I see the full picture of recovery.
- ☐ I am here to be happy.
- ☐ All good things are possible for me.
- ☐ I can create inner change.
- ☐ I become aware of what negativity is costing me.
- ☐ I am strong enough to grieve.
- ☐ I am in charge of my own response.
- ☐ I am able to make small changes.
- ☐ I can create new beliefs.
- ☐ I accept and experience life.
- ☐ I accept things as they are.
- ☐ I understand the role I play in co-creating my reality.
- ☐ I choose my own road.
- ☐ I recognize that blame doesn't work.

- ☐ I am capable of healing in my relationships.
- ☐ I let go of bitterness.
- ☐ I recognize that judgment gets me nowhere.
- ☐ I recognize the futility of trying to control others.

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Self-forgiveness

The ability to forgive yourself for making a mistake or hurting someone is vital in releasing your suffering, especially when that person chooses not to forgive you.

1. What do you feel you need to forgive yourself for? Think of a situation that you're struggling to forgive yourself for. Describe what happened below.

2. If you could do it over, what would you do differently?

3. If a close friend was in the same situation, what would you say to offer compassion? Say it to yourself!

4. Use this formula for your self-forgiveness affirmation or you can modify it as needed.

- I accept that I'm human and I make mistakes.
- I forgive myself for
- I acknowledge that I have learned a lesson from which I will grow.
- I release myself from

5. Try writing an apology to yourself for being self-critical and harsh.

A quality apology includes three parts:

- (1) taking responsibility for our actions and their impact,
- (2) expressing regret, and
- (3) offering to fix things and make amends.

6. What daily self-care action can you take to love and care for yourself?

Self Forgiveness Affirmations

- ☐ I treat myself with gentleness and respect.
- ☐ I forgive myself for participating in this dynamic.
- ☐ I am willing to live with all of who I am.
- ☐ I accept that there are some people, things, and situations that I can do nothing about.
- ☐ I practice new ways of being.
- ☐ I am an uncritical observer of my own self.
- ☐ I am free to be who I am.
- ☐ I am capable of changing.
- ☐ I affirm myself in positive ways.
- ☐ I can deal with my needs in healthy ways.
- ☐ I can reach out.
- ☐ I can live through feelings of shame and let them go.
- ☐ It is all right to love myself.
- ☐ I trust my inner voice.
- ☐ I am never alone.
- ☐ I am willing to learn.
- ☐ I let go of my need for perfection.
- ☐ I do my part to heal.
- ☐ I accept my slips and falls.
- ☐ I look within myself for myself.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Releasing Blame

1. Who do you blame in your life? Do you often find yourself thinking or saying things like, “If my parent loved me...,” or, “If my partner would only...,” or, “If this had not happened in my life...”?

2. What excuses or limiting beliefs are stopping you from moving forward? Whom or what do you blame when you don’t achieve your goals?

3. What would you say to people you blame?

4. Think about people who supported you. What advice would they give you now? If you can't think about supportive people, what would you tell a friend in the same situation, struggling to let go of their blame?

5. If you are unhappy with your life, what steps can you take today to change it?

Apologizing

Apologizing might be difficult, yet it's critical to everything relationship, whether personal or professional.

Reflect on difficult past moments you feel are unresolved. If you could apologize to or make amends with anyone, who would it be?

The following are basic steps to apologize:

1. Realization: Becoming aware that you did something wrong, unintentionally or not.

Think about something you said or did that caused someone else harm or let to hurt feelings. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective. Can you recognize how your behavior or words might have caused harm to them or possibly could have been misinterpreted or misconstrued?

2. Remorse: Regretting what you did or said.

Express any regrets you have about the thing you said or did:

3. Apologizing: Expressing how sorry you are, even if it was an accident.

In a few words, write down your apology. The following are some heart-healing words to inspire you:

- From the bottom of my heart, I am so sorry. It was not my intention to cause you harm.
- I apologize for hurting your feelings. I hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me.
- I apologize for my hurtful (words/actions). I deeply regret that I caused you harm.
- I regret the choices I made. I hope in time you will be able to forgive me.
- I understand now how my behavior caused you to feel hurt.
- There are simply not enough words to say how sorry I am and how I wish this never happened.
- This is long overdue. I am sorry I hurt you during that time.
- To say that I am ashamed of my unkind words/behavior is an understatement. I ask for your forgiveness.

4. Amends: Doing what you can to fix or make things right.

Write down what you can do to genuinely create healing and make amends:

5. Listen: Now that you have apologized, listen to the recipient and allow them time and space to respond.

Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes and offer them validation (e.g. I hear you, I can see how you'd feel that way given what happened, etc.)

6. Release: Once you have taken responsibility, apologized, and offered to fix things, release what happened, whether or not the other person chooses to forgive.

Reconciliation

1. Write down a list of people who are important to you and with whom you want to reconcile:

2. Whether you choose to send a text or pick up the phone and call the person, the following are some phrases to break the ice:

- ☐ Regardless of who said what, you are important to me. Let's put the past behind us.
- ☐ I miss you and I would love to catch up. Can we get together the next time you are in town?
- ☐ I want you to know how much you have meant in my life. Life is too short for us to be apart.
- ☐ I can't even remember what has kept us apart, but I do remember how important you are to me.

☐ _____

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2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 13, 17, 21. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Forgiveness material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

Document-specific corrections

- Keep Forgiveness explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content; extracted candidate names include: Do a Forgiveness Inventory, Forgiveness Inventory, Score Benefits of Forgiving Score . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use Forgiveness activities as psychoeducation and structured reflection, not diagnosis or a stand-alone treatment plan. Adapt or stop any exercise that worsens distress, functioning, conflict, pain, or dissociation, and escalate care according to the actual presentation.

Crisis and current resources

- For Forgiveness, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. · Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/national-behavioral-health-crisis-care>

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- <https://988lifeline.org/>