



Short Forgiveness Instructions as Taught by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Based on the Book "Guide to Forgiveness Meditation"

This meditation is a way to remove emotional blocks in the mind that has stopped your feeling of lovingkindness from arising. It is fully accepting who we are. It is letting go of the unwholesome and making way for the wholesome.

First:

Set aside a minimum of 30 minutes each time you sit. Find a comfortable sitting position and promise yourself you won't move or change your posture.

Begin by repeating the phrase, "*I forgive myself for not understanding.*" Put this sincere wish for forgiveness for yourself, in your heart, and stay with that. Gently smile as you do this- just put a little Buddha smile on your face - this keeps your mind light.

Sincerely wish this forgiveness for yourself. This feeling or wish of forgiveness is your object of meditation. Any sort of a feeling of forgiveness can be there, but the feeling is not the object – just the wish for forgiveness.

The phrase '*not understanding*' means that in the past you acted negatively to yourself, or someone else. Maybe you got angry, or someone else caused you pain. You reacted, and then afterward, you felt sorry. We have all acted without understanding. We don't understand that acting with anger or any other unwholesome state ultimately leads to our own pain. It can create guilt and remorse in our lives. It comes back to haunt us.

When someone acts negatively against you they have no real wholesome *understanding*. They don't realize that what they are doing will create even more hard-heartedness and guilt in *themselves*. They don't understand that getting

angry at someone or making them feel bad does not lead to *their* own happiness. So we need to also forgive them for not understanding.

It is essential that the phrase sinks in — that you give it time to work, and not change it before it has had a chance to allow a memory to come up of something you did or something someone else did. If you have given the phrase a chance to work for a while and nothing comes up, you could try another one like, "*I forgive myself for causing myself and others pain.*" You are removing any trapped negativity, bit by bit, with this practice. Please do not use phrases that put yourself down - negative phrases don't work. Don't use something like, 'I forgive myself for being stupid.'

Second:

Now, when any hard feeling or painful experience comes up in your mind, the first thing you do is to forgive that, then relax and soften into that painful feeling allow it to be there, without reacting, smile again, and return to forgiving yourself. For example, you could have a thought like "I don't deserve to be happy" or "I don't like myself because..." If a thought like that arises you immediately forgive yourself and let go of that negativity. Just FORGIVE and RELAX in two steps.

Do this with everything that pulls you away from forgiving yourself.

- 1.FORGIVE
- 2.RELAX

Be sincere and keep your forgiveness going - let it act on anything negative that arises. Forgive any stories and hard feelings that come up. Forgive anything that arises that tries to stop your intention to forgive.

Your objective is to keep forgiveness going until you feel like there is nothing more to forgive.

As you continue forgiving yourself, memories of various people and situations will come up which need your forgiveness. There may be a lot of energy involved with some situations. Your objective now is to shift your focus to spending more time

to forgive those situations - and not immediately go back to yourself. You repeat the same phrase you used for yourself directly to them: "I forgive you for not understanding." As you do this, do not get involved in any story about what happened. In your mind just look them in the eye and forgive them. Stay with them for a while and let the wish for forgiveness take hold. If you get distracted from the process, you know what to do. Forgive the distraction. Even if it is thinking about 'what's for lunch', forgive that as it is distracting you! Any kind of thought that is distracting you, forgive it and come back to work with this person some more.

Keep working with the same phrases on yourself until there is some relief — only then can you change your phrases and begin again with new phrases. Your phrases might be about forgiving yourself or for holding grudges, or for holding negative thoughts about someone. Keep your thoughts aimed at positive change and forgive any judgments.

While forgiving, you might have a thought that comes up like, "I am not going to forgive this person because they are just plain *mean*...they don't deserve forgiveness." Forgive that feeling, and then, keep on going. Soften and release those thoughts. Relax and re-smile as you return to forgiving. Ask yourself, "Do I want to change?" If so, then sincerely give up your attachment to feeling unwholesome thoughts about yourself and others. Change is good. Just do it!

Remember, having a sad feeling is OK, and if tears come just let them come. Tears take the pressure off your heart and mind. It is a good thing. So, do not be tough on yourself. Just let those tears flow. Get some tissues or a towel and let them come. Your objective is to keep your forgiveness going and completely forgive yourself and others. Then, any attachment to those memories will just fade away.

Third:

It is not unusual in this meditation for the person you are working with to smile back at you and to forgive you as well. This is the positive result of letting go of the tension and tightness in the situation. Some wonderful relief can arise when this naturally happens, and that might mean that you are done with that person. But be careful that you don't ask them to forgive you. Your job is to provide the

right conditions for you to *receive and accept* forgiveness from *them* too — and... this *can* happen.

If that person comes back again later in another session, that's ok. You treat them the same way again. But this time the forgiveness will go faster. Gradually, they won't even come up anymore. Now that person is gone. So, you go back to quietly forgiving yourself, once again, until someone else comes up, and you forgive them in the same way. If you aren't sure of when to let go of forgiving someone, just go ahead and let them go. They will always come back if they need to. Don't worry..., they will only disappear when you are finished with them.

Going for a walk

When your sitting ends you can do some walking meditation, and, in your mind, as you walk, keep on gently saying, "I forgive you, you forgive me!" "I forgive you, you forgive me!" — this keeps drumming into your brain that you really do want to stop holding onto past painful memories and forgive them. You want to let go of all these memories. Forgive anything or anyone that comes up during that time.

You can time the phrases, "I forgive you, you forgive me" to each step as you walk. With each step repeat the next word and continue over and over like a mantra. This is different than other TWIM practices as we are actively encouraging our mind to come up with more things to forgive.

In your sitting, when a phrase goes dry, it's done. You choose a different phrase and then start again. In the beginning, it might take a little while for your brain to trust that you really do want to do this. There can be periods of resistance where nothing comes up — be patient and continue. Forgive yourself for not having anything come up!

When you are not sitting or walking, you can still commit to forgiving whatever is going on in your life. Bring forgiveness into your workplace; take it into your home. Practice it with your friends. Make it a habit of forgiving and softening

In summary:

1. Sit for 20-30 minutes- Say the phrase, 'I forgive myself for not understanding.'
Forgive anything that arises that takes you away from forgiving yourself.
2. Then, walk for 15-20 minutes in the way outlined above.
3. Continue this way for the rest of the day. Forgive anything that comes up during the day.

In this way, you can continue letting go of all pain, and finally, become free from the heaviness of the past.

Welcome back to the Present Moment!