



Brief Forgiveness Instructions as Taught by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Based on the Book “Guide to Forgiveness Meditation”

First:

This meditation is the practice of compassion and generosity towards yourself and others. It is an act of kindness. So, set aside a minimum of 30 minutes each time you practice. Find a comfortable sitting position and promise yourself you won't move or change your posture.

Now, begin by repeating the phrase, “*I forgive myself for not understanding.*” Put a sincere wish for forgiveness for yourself in your heart, and stay with that feeling. Gently smile as you do this- just put a little Buddha smile on your face. This will keep your mind light.

Sincerely wish forgiveness for yourself. This feeling of forgiveness is your *object* of meditation. In 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, and they didn't understand either. You reacted, and then afterward, you felt sorry. We have all acted without understanding. This has created guilt and remorse in our lives.

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 work and bring up yourself or someone from a past event. If nothing comes up with this phrase 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.

Now when any hard feeling or painful experience comes up in your mind, you forgive that, relax, smile, and keep going. 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 tries to stop your intention to forgive, you immediately forgive yourself and let go of that negativity.

Be sincere and keep up your forgiveness intention going. Let it flow with everything 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 there is nothing more to forgive.

This is where we use some simple steps to let go of anything that tries to stop the act of forgiveness. We call these steps, the 6 Rs. They go like this:

RECOGNIZE any thought that tries to stop your intention to forgive.

RELEASE mind's attention to that thought- just stop thinking it.

RELAX any tightness or tension pulling you to think about this thought and especially in tightnesses in your head.

Then **RE-SMILE** and put that little Buddha smile back on your lips and

RETURN to your intention to forgive yourself or any person who comes up. Keep your forgiving going for as long as you can. If any distraction tries to stop you again then

REPEAT these 6Rs if anything tries to stop you again.

Second:

As you continue forgiving yourself, memories of various people and situations will come up which need your forgiveness. Your intention should shift now to forgive those persons. You repeat the same phrase you used for yourself directly to them: "I forgive YOU for not understanding."

As you do this, don't 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. This time, if you get distracted from this process, you know what to do. 6R!

Keep working with the same phrases that you used for yourself until there is relief – only then change your phrases and begin again with new reminders. 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 those judgments.

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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." 6 R that feeling, and then, keep on going with your objective. Soften and release these thoughts. Relax and re-smile as you return to forgiving.

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

Third:

It is not unusual in this meditation for the person you are working on to smile back at you and to forgive you as well. This is the potential for the third part of this practice. Some wonderful relief can arise when this naturally happens, and that can mean that you are done with that person. But, be very careful that you don't ask them to forgive you because this is all about pure compassion and generosity. Your job is to provide the right conditions for you to *receive and accept* forgiveness from them – and, this *can* happen.

If that person comes back again in another session later – that's ok. You treat them the same way again. But this time the forgiveness will go faster and more easily. Gradually they won't come up anymore. Now that person is gone. So, you go back, and quietly say the same phrase again and forgive yourself until someone else comes up, and you forgive them in the same way.

Going for a walk

When your sitting ends you can go take a walk 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 want to stop holding onto past painful memories and forgive them. You want to let go of all these memories.

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 time for your brain to trust that you really do want to do this. In the beginning, there can be periods of resistance where nothing comes up – be patient and continue on.

When you are not sitting or walking, you can make a commitment to forgive 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 this way, you continue letting go of this pain, and finally become free from the heaviness of the past.