



# Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**  
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## February is For Forgiving!

February is typically thought of as the month of romantic “L-O-V-E,” but this year I want to challenge you to do something different. This February, I want you to think of someone you need to forgive. Who have you been holding a grudge against? Who brings up resentment and bitterness in you when you think of him or her? Got it? Now, let’s talk about what to do about this!

I have seen so many people personally and professionally who refuse to let go of the hurt feelings from some past wound. Maybe a parent wasn’t nurturing enough. Maybe a coworker took credit for work that wasn’t theirs to take. Maybe a partner had an affair. This is not to say those things are not hurtful. Of course they are. But to never forgive and move forward with your life is much more hurtful – to you.

Forgiveness is the decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. It is a choice. It doesn’t come naturally for most of us, and we really have to think about it. It’s okay if it is hard for you. Most worthwhile things in life are hard.

How do we end up in the space of unforgiveness? Why do we hold on to grudges and resentment? Actually, it does serve a purpose. We’re simply trying to protect ourselves from being hurt. So, if we continuously make ourselves think about that past hurt, maybe we won’t get hurt again. The problem is we are so busy protecting ourselves and licking our wounds that it is damaging all our other relationships – even with those people who haven’t hurt us!

I was talking with a group of people recently about this very topic, and we had an interesting discussion about “forgiving and forgetting.” I’m not overly convinced that “forgetting” is necessary in the forgiveness process. Forgetting would indicate that it doesn’t matter if the injuring party is remorseful and works on changing. I think that’s asking a bit much. I can forgive you, but I have also learned something about you. And I have to choose if I will put myself in the same position again with you. That’s a risk I probably wouldn’t be willing to take unless I felt remorse and change from you. “Forgiving and letting go” is probably a better goal. Letting go indicates that I am not going to spend negative time and energy on what has happened. (But it doesn’t mean I am oblivious!)

Here are some suggestions for attaining your February goal:

**1. Wish him/her well.** Instead of ruminating on how mad/hurt/angry you are, begin to wish the person who injured you well. Hope that this person finds happiness and peace so they no longer have the need to treat others as you have been treated. By doing this, you limit the amount of negative time and energy you spend on the person or situation.

**2. Learn the lesson.** If you’ve read my articles any time at all, you know I believe that life is a series of lessons. And we get to keep repeating the lesson we

are on until we learn it. So, what is the lesson here for you? Are you supposed to be a better person than the person who hurt you? Are you supposed to slow your pace down in relationships and not be so vulnerable so soon? Do you need to not put all your time and energy into one relationship (which leaves you devastated when all doesn’t go well)?

**3. Gain some perspective.** Understand this: for the most part, people who know better do better. So, this person must not know better. Maybe they don’t have the tools to handle things appropriately. Maybe they are so miserable they want everyone else to be just as miserable. Maybe they were treated similarly and think this is normal. Choosing to “make excuses” for the person who hurt you, frees you up to let go and move forward.

Keep in mind my favorite quote about this topic of forgiveness from the late Carrie Fisher: “Resentment is the poison you swallow hoping the other person will die.” Stop drinking the poison of unforgiveness!