



Brief Forgiveness Instructions As Taught by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Based on the Book "Guide to Forgiveness Meditation"

First:

This meditation is truly an act of Compassion and Generosity towards yourself and others who might come up. 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 in your heart and stay with that intention. Gently smile as you do this- just put a little Buddha smile on your face. This will keep your mind light.

Sincerely wish forgiveness to yourself. The intention to forgive yourself is your *object* of meditation. In this phrase, '*not understanding*' means that in the past you acted negatively in some situation before you knew what was really going on. Maybe you got angry, or someone else caused you pain when they didn't understand either. You reacted, and then, afterward, you felt sorry. We have all acted without understanding at some time in life. And this 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 bring up a situation in your mind, 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." Please do not use phrases that put yourself down. Negative phrases don't work. You are removing any trapped negativity bit by bit with this practice.

Now, when any hard feeling or painful experience comes up in your mind, you forgive that, relax, smile, and keep going. For example, you might have a thought of something 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 soften into that thought.

Be sincere and keep up your intention going to forgive. 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 your 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 pulling you to think about this thought and especially 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,

REPEAT these six steps if anything tries to stop you again.

Second:

As you continue forgiving yourself, memories of past events will come up with **someone, other than yourself**, who needs your forgiveness. Your intention should shift now to forgive someone else. 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 awhile and let the wish for forgiveness take hold. This time, if you get distracted, you know what to do. 6R!

Keep working with the same phrase you used for yourself until that phrase has no more energy – only then change your phrase and begin again. Your phrases might be about forgiving yourself 'for holding grudges', or 'for holding bad thoughts about someone'. Just keep your thoughts aimed at positive change.

-
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...It just isn't going to happen!" 6 R that feeling, and then, keep on going with your objective. Soften and release that thought. Relax and re-smile as you return to forgiving.

Remember that having a sad feeling is OK and if tears begin to fall this is just fine. Tears take pressure off your heart and mind. It's a good thing. So, don't be tough on yourself. Just let those tears come. Get some tissues or a towel and let them flow. 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 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 if it happens. And, this can really happen. If we ask for forgiveness, it means we are trying to control the outcome – so let this go.

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 you see someone else come up, and you forgive them in the same way.

Going for a walk

When you stop sitting you can take a walk and, in your mind, as you walk, keep on saying, "I forgive you, *and* you forgive me!" "I forgive you, *and*, you forgive me! – and this keeps drumming into your brain that you want to stop holding onto past painful memories. You want to be kinder and forgiving of everything in the future.

When a phrase goes dry, it's done. You choose a different phrase and start again. In the beginning, it might take a little time for your brain to trust that you really do want to do this. There can be periods of resistance where nothing comes up in the beginning - be patient and continue on.

When you are not sitting with this practice or walking, you can make a commitment to forgive whatever is going on in life! Bring forgiveness into your workplace. Take it into your home. Practice it with your friends. Make it a habit to forgive and soften. In this way, you continue letting go of all this pain, and finally become free from the heaviness of the past.