



The healing power of forgiveness April 2017

Angry words fly. A misunderstanding turns into accusations. A reputation is ruined by unfounded rumors. It's only a matter of time until everyone experiences some kind of hurt.

Sometimes the offense is accidental. Other times the attack is a deliberate aim to inflict pain. The end result is the same. A relationship is shattered, and we face hard choices. Do we seek revenge? Do we ignore it? Or do we take a radical approach and forgive the offender, even if that person never admits having done anything wrong?

Forgiveness doesn't come naturally. We like to hold grudges. Our natural desire is to defend ourselves and at least make sure others know we suffered wrongfully.

Research has shown that an unforgiving attitude affects our overall mental and physical health. Harboring resentment and bitterness toward the perpetrator hurts us far more than it hurts him or her. It is *our* blood pressure that is raised, *our* immune system that is weakened and *our* stress hormones that are depleted.



Forgiveness doesn't mean we forget the incident or consequences are erased. What forgiveness does mean is that we choose to release our personal need to "get even." We identify and acknowledge our feelings of insult, attempt to view the situation through the other person's eyes and make a conscious decision not to retaliate.

Sound simple? No way. When a bone is broken, it takes time to mend, and it must be protected during the healing process. The same is true for a broken relationship. As we gradually "move on," choosing intentionally to not let that person or event negatively impact our lives, we can also look to family and friends for support. The healing can take awhile, but the emotional, physical and mental restoration are well worth the effort.

You and your family do not have to struggle alone. LCFS counselors help families generate hope and cope with life's challenges. Most insurance plans accepted; sliding-scale fees are available on a case-by-case basis. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact us at lcfs_info@lcfs.org or 800-363-LCFS (5237). Discover LCFS and the services we offer at www.lcfs.org and www.facebook.com/LCFSIL.



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Central Illinois

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LCFS office, Springfield

Southern Illinois

LCFS office, Belleville
LCFS office, Mt. Vernon

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Lutheran Child and
Family Services of Illinois

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