



# Wellbeing

## Forgiveness

### Forgiveness and self-care

Forgiveness isn't something that gets talked about that much – you may have noticed? And it certainly isn't widely understood that there is a direct relationship between being forgiving and our wellbeing. The truth is that forgiveness is key to our wellbeing and also an act of self-care. Being forgiving has been shown to decrease depression, anxiety, unhealthy anger, and even the symptoms of PTSD.

But we all know that forgiveness is not an easy thing. When someone hurts us, it can cause pain, confusion and disruption. This can be traumatic - perhaps a partner betrays our trust, or we are a victim of crime or bullied in some way. When we have been wronged or suffered, we feel the turmoil inside of us, quite literally. Our inner emotional world is thrown into chaos and it is hard to focus or concentrate on anything else. (We may also have to acknowledge that we have upset others.)

When we have been hurt, we hold on to the pain - we are cognitively, emotionally and physically affected and our relationships can suffer. This is unhealthy for our wellbeing.

Forgiveness is a strong antidote to all this hurt – it can help heal deep psychological wounds. It's not easy and we have to do some work and reflection to move towards resolution. But it is about letting go and deciding that the hurt done to us will not determine who we are or who we become.

So yes, being forgiving is deeply challenging but it can also be profoundly freeing.

Forgiveness acknowledges the pain we have experienced and does not excuse the action, the trauma caused or pretend it didn't happen. It is not quick or easy and it is not about forgetting. We may have to recognise, depending on the hurt caused, that we have to learn to live in new ways and life may not be the same again. It may be a process of forming new and different ways of living and being.

Being forgiving, which is of course one of the Oasis 9 Habits, is an act of self-care and at the very same time holds the opportunity for reconciliation, bringing greater wellbeing and transformation to the people we live amongst and the communities we are a part of.

For more see: Robert Enright (2015) *Eight Keys to Forgiveness*. Norton & Company. New York.