



SELF-FORGIVENESS

A Guided Exercise for Letting Go and Moving Forward

Empowered Wellness Client Resource

Why Self-Forgiveness Matters

Everyone makes mistakes. Guilt can help us learn and grow, but staying stuck in self-punishment keeps us from healing.

Self-forgiveness does **not** mean ignoring what happened. It means learning from it and allowing yourself to move forward.

Step 1: What Happened?

Briefly describe the situation that is weighing on you:

Step 2: What Was My Responsibility?

Be honest and balanced.

What part was truly yours?

What parts were **outside** your control?



Step 3: Separate Facts from Self-Criticism

Facts (what actually occurred):

Harsh thoughts about yourself:

Ask yourself:

Would I say these things to someone I care about?

Step 4: What Did I Learn?

This experience helped me realize:

- I need clearer boundaries
- I was acting from stress or fear
- I didn't have the skills yet
- I want to respond differently next time
- Other: _____

Growth is the purpose of guilt.

Step 5: Repair (If Possible)

Have you taken steps to make things right?



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- I apologized
 - I changed my behavior
 - I accepted consequences
 - Repair is not possible now

If repair isn't possible, healing is still allowed.

Step 6: Offer Yourself Compassion

If a friend made this same mistake, I would tell them:

Now read those words to yourself.

Step 7: Forgiveness Statement

Complete this sentence:

I acknowledge what happened, I accept responsibility where appropriate, and I allow myself to grow instead of punish myself.

My statement:

Reflection

What would change if you stopped punishing yourself?



REPAIR OR PUNISHMENT?

A Simple Guide for Understanding What Guilt Is Asking You To Do

When guilt shows up, your mind may push you in two different directions:

REPAIR (Healthy Direction)

Repair helps you move forward.

Repair means:

- Taking responsibility
- Making amends when possible
- Learning from the experience
- Changing future behavior

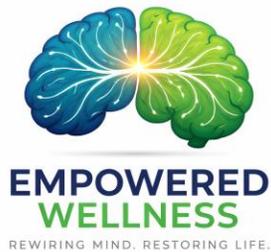
Repair improves the future.

PUNISHMENT (Unhelpful Direction)

Punishment keeps you stuck.

Punishment looks like:

- Constant self-criticism



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- Replaying mistakes repeatedly
 - Believing you don't deserve happiness
 - Over-apologizing long after things are resolved
 - Feeling you must suffer to "make up" for it

Punishment hurts you without fixing anything.

Ask Yourself Three Questions

Did harm actually occur?

Yes No Unsure

Is there something I can realistically repair?

Yes No

Will this action improve the future or just hurt me now?

If it only hurts you → it is punishment, not healing.

Decision Path

Mistake → Responsibility → Repair → Growth → Release

Healing happens after repair, not after suffering.

MOVING FORWARD AFTER GUILT

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Empowered Wellness Counseling Rewiring Mind. Restoring Life.
This handout is provided for educational purposes and is intended to support therapeutic skill-building. It does not replace individualized clinical care.



A Simple Three-Step Practice

Step 1: Own It

“I made a mistake.”

(Not: “I am a mistake.”)

Step 2: Repair It

Ask:

- What action reflects my values now?
 - What can I do differently next time?
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Step 3: Release It

Once responsibility and learning happen, continued punishment is no longer helpful.

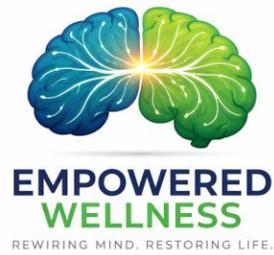
You are allowed to move forward.

Helpful Reminder

Guilt is meant to guide change.

It is **not** meant to become a life sentence.

Personal Reflection



What is one small way I can move forward today?

Empowered Wellness

Growth through insight, compassion, and intentional change.