

Forgive - to pardon an offense or an offender

I was listening to a sermon on forgiveness and started to think about how it relates to leadership. Forgiveness or lack thereof can have grave consequences for us as leaders. It certainly goes much deeper than just leadership; it goes to all aspects of our lives.

Personal Forgiveness

Forgiving ourselves for past mistakes can undo the paralytic fear of repeating the past, or worse, living our lives in it. Holding a grudge against yourself makes about as much sense as holding yourself hostage at gun point. It is one of the worst forms of self-punishment and so unnecessary. So, keep the lesson, throw away the torture. We must look hard at our failures, learn from them, and decide what we would do if we found ourselves in a similar situation in the future. Forgive yourself, take a step forward, and then move on.

Interpersonal Forgiveness

Interpersonal forgiveness from a leadership perspective is essential to our effectiveness and fairness as leaders. Through my facilitation practice I've found myself in conflict resolution situations where the parties involved simply can't let go of past failures, leaving both sides ineffective. Conflict situations are tough when they are peer to peer; they are devastating when it is leader to direct report. At the end of the day the only actions we truly can control, sometimes questionably, are our own—our reaction to the situations we are placed in. As leaders, a lack of forgiveness can cloud our judgment and jade our interactions with the person who is the target of our anger, hurt or pain. It's a trust-destroyer and huge detriment to team effectiveness and both parties lose. Many times, the act of not forgiving hurts the offended worse than the offender. It's like drinking a cup of poison to get back at someone else.

Dealing with interpersonal forgiveness can be tricky. Sometimes the person you think you need to forgive doesn't even know they have wronged you.

- If the person in the interaction knows they have wronged you and asks for forgiveness, grant it, and move on.
- If you are the one needing forgiveness, and the other party knows it, meet with that person, and sincerely ask for their forgiveness.
 - If you need to forgive someone who does not know they have offended you, or doesn't think that what they did was wrong, quietly forgive them inside without reliving the experience with them or reopening a wound.

In other words, the last scenario is done in your heart, not out loud. Many well-meaning people have approached someone they felt was an offending party only to find out the person didn't even know they had done anything that was perceived as wrong. "Getting something off your chest" is not always constructive. Judith Martin said, "The one prediction that NEVER comes true is *"you'll thank me for telling you this."*



Forgiveness

Carter Campbell

Roi Campbell

Finally, a common misunderstanding of forgiveness is that it requires two parties, it doesn't. It just requires someone to have enough character and humility to realize we all make mistakes and a desire to live out of the future, not the past. We can't go back and change the past, but we can begin today to create a new future.

Forgiveness is letting go of a hope for a better past. – Anonymous

Application

What grudges are holding you back both personally and professionally.

Who do you need to forgive?

What relationships need repair professionally?

What relationships need repair personally?

Are you willing to do what you need to do to repair them?

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