



OptumHealthSM
Behavioral Solutions

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Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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Harnessing the Power to Forgive Find Your Inner Peace

Are you holding onto a grudge? Perhaps a friend canceled plans at the last minute. Maybe a relative made a rude comment, or a neighbor borrowed something from you and hasn't returned it. Whatever it is, you're still upset — weeks or even years later.

Whether it was a minor annoyance or a big hurt, it can sometimes be hard to forgive. But, carrying a chip on your shoulder isn't healthy. And, it can affect your relationships. In the long run, you'll feel a lot better if you try to let go and forgive.

Take Steps to Put It Behind You

When you forgive, you stop being angry. It can take time and effort on your part — but it's not impossible. These tips can help:

Make forgiveness a goal.

Don't expect your feelings to change overnight. But,

you can get started on the process today by setting the intention to forgive.

Write down your thoughts.

Think about what upsets you and how you feel about it. Sometimes, putting pen to paper can really help you put things into perspective. It also may help to write a letter to the person you're angry at — even if you never send it.

Try to understand the point of view of the other person.

He or she may have done or said something in a moment of anger and later regretted it. Or, the person may not have meant to hurt you.

Don't expect an apology.

That may never happen. While you can't control the actions of others, your own forgiveness should be given freely. And, don't focus on righting the wrong or getting revenge.

Take small steps. It may help to practice forgiveness on a small scale before attempting to heal your memory of a more serious concern. For example, forgive the rude salesperson or the driver who cut you off in traffic. The more you do it, the more natural it will become.

Forgiving Yourself

Sometimes, the person you need to forgive is the one staring back at you from the mirror. Here are some strategies to help you heal:

- **Stop replaying failures over and over in your mind.** Reminding yourself of the things you've done wrong isn't going to help. When this happens, stop and focus on something more positive.
- **Learn from the past.** Everyone makes mistakes from time to time. The lessons they teach can help you grow.
- **Apologize.** If your actions hurt someone else, ask for forgiveness. It's never too late to say you're sorry.

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Prepare for stumbling blocks. It can be easy to slide back into old habits of getting angry about something that happened. When you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts, remember the progress you've already made.

Talk to someone. This can be a friend or a therapist. Someone who is neutral can help you gain a new point of view.

Forgiveness doesn't mean burying your feelings or excusing bad behavior.

Instead, it's about changing the way you think — and improving your own peace of mind.

OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions is here to help. Call or log on any time for help with any of life's challenges.



Let Go and Live Better

Did you know that anger can be harmful to your health? It causes your body to act as if it's under stress. When this happens, your blood pressure and heart rate can rise, and your immune response can be weakened.

This same reaction occurs whenever you replay an unhappy event in your mind and feel angry about it. Over time, that can cause some serious problems.

But, when you forgive, it can be healing. That's because giving up a grudge helps you release negative feelings and clear a path for your future happiness. The time and energy you spent being upset can now be used to help you move forward.



And, it's not just your emotional health that may be helped by forgiveness. There's a strong link between your mind and body. So, the positive outlook you gain can help keep your body healthy, too. In fact,

people who make a habit of forgiveness have fewer cardiovascular problems and stress-related illnesses.

The next time you feel yourself getting angry, remember the healing power forgiveness can bring.

Resources

OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

www.liveandworkwell.com

Use the search word "forgive" to learn more about how forgiveness can help you improve your relationships.

Use the search phrase "mind and body" to learn more about the connection between your emotional and physical health.

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services.