

MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHEET SERIES
VOLUME 10



Forgiveness & Apologies

CREATED BY: STEPHANIE BURTON, MA, MSED, LMHC

This resource is for your personal, educational, or professional use only.

Please do not copy, resell, or distribute without prior written consent from the creator.

Thank you for honoring the work and the care behind it.

While it can be used as a tool to supplement an existing therapeutic relationship with a licensed mental health professional (LMHC, LCSW, LMFT, LPC, or a Licensed Psychologist), this resource should NOT be used as a substitute for therapy.

If you find that this resource brings up feelings and thoughts that are challenging to deal with on your own or with a trusted person, I encourage you to seek therapy to continue your healing journey.

Copyright © 2025 by Stephanie C. Burton, MA, MEd, LMHC
All rights reserved.



Introduction

VOL. 7

Forgiveness can be a difficult practice.

To forgive is not to excuse. It does not mean pretending harm never happened or forcing reconciliation with someone who remains unsafe. It is not about forgetting—it is remembering without being chained to bitterness.

Forgiveness also does not mean automatic reconciliation. Rebuilding a relationship requires mutual trust, changed behavior, and safety. Forgiveness, by contrast, is an inward release, whether or not reconciliation is possible.

Forgiveness doesn't always bring instant relief. Sometimes, it unfolds in phases of anger, grief, clarity, and release. Some days you feel free; other days, you revisit the ache. Both are part of the process. Importantly, forgiving someone (or being forgiven yourself) does not mean that pain disappears or that feelings are no longer valid once you have extended forgiveness. Forgiveness releases the power of the offense over you—it does not erase the feelings themselves.

To forgive is to loosen resentment's grip on your nervous system, your thoughts, and your heart. It is choosing not to let someone else's harm dictate the pace of your healing.

Soulfull Note to Self:

**Forgiveness means:
Allowing yourself to grieve
what was lost.**

**Creating space for joy,
even while wounds remain
tender.**

**Releasing the illusion that
the past could be undone.**

**The following pages
provide education,
tools, and journal
prompts designed to
help us gain a
general
understanding of the
process of
forgiveness, as well
as how to extend
appropriate
apologies that.**

Apologies...Bridges, Not Guarantees

THE 3 A'S

Apologies are bridges, not guarantees, to forgiveness. When apologies never come, or arrive shallow and incomplete, it is natural to feel disappointment, betrayal, or grief. At those times, forgiveness becomes a solo journey, not dependent on another's words but on your own commitment to release. **A true apology should include the Three A's:**

- **Acknowledgment** of the specific harm.
- **Accountability** without excuses or blame-shifting.
- **Action** that demonstrates real change in your behaviors that caused harm.

The Emotional Territory of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is rarely linear. As Rumi (the philosopher, not Bey's baby lol) wrote: "The wound is the place where the light enters you." This does not romanticize pain, but honors how grief can open unexpected pathways to resilience.

If left unaddressed, unforgiveness can become resentment. Resentment, when carried too long, keeps the nervous system in fight-or-flight mode. It fuels constant defensiveness, which can block the creation or repair of healthy, meaningful relationships.

Forgiveness practices rooted in mindfulness—such as deep breathing, grounding rituals, storytelling, and boundary-setting—can soothe the body and remind you that safety is still possible in relationships.

Letter of Release: On the next two pages, write two letters (you don't have to send them). Letter 1: Pour out every unsaid word of anger, grief, or longing—without censoring yourself. Letter 2: Write as if you are releasing the weight of that burden.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Forgiveness Exercises

VOL. 10

The Apology Audit

List apologies you've received that are most prominent in your mind.

Which apologies felt sincere? Which apologies left you empty? Reflect on the qualities that made the difference.

- *Close your eyes and picture the person at a distance.*
- *Imagine a heavy rope connecting you.*
- *With each exhale, see the strands unraveling.*
- *You may choose to let the rope fall—or simply witness it loosening without forcing release.*



Sitting still, with your feet planted on the ground, and your hands on your lap, or to your sides (whichever feels most comfortable), scan your body. You may do this with your eyes open, or eyes closed. Ask yourself, where does unforgiveness, and/or the need for deeper accountability live in my body (jaw, fists, chest)?

Use gentle movement—yoga stretches, shaking, humming—to shift and release stored tension.



In your own journal or notebook, write about the following:

- What am I afraid might happen if I forgive?
- What part of me feels protected by holding onto resentment?
- When I imagine release, what does freedom look like in my body, relationships, and daily life?
- If an apology never comes, how can I still honor my pain and move toward healing?
- What cultural or family beliefs about forgiveness have shaped me? Which do I want to keep, and which am I ready to lay down?

Note to Self:

Forgiveness is not about erasing what happened. It is about reclaiming yourself from what happened.

Sometimes forgiveness looks like reconciliation. Other times it looks like silence. Sometimes it happens in the quiet privacy of your own mind, body and soul.

Each act of forgiveness is a step toward a return to your truest self.

notes

VOL. 10

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

About THE CREATOR

I'm a Midwestern girl raised in a home adorned in Black art, music, literature, and culture. From Faith Ringgold on the walls, to Toni Morrison on the shelves, and old-school R&B spinning through the house, my upbringing instilled a deep pride in my heritage, and a love for storytelling, creativity, and community that still guides me today.



My academic path took a few turns—Nursing, and then Psychology at Fisk University, a master's in Sociology, and ultimately a second master's in Counselor Education—each step clarifying my calling to become a therapist. Through personal experiences, faith, and growth, I felt led toward soul-centered, culturally grounded mental health work.

When I'm not in session, I'm creating, coloring, crocheting, listening to music, podcasts or audiobooks, or watching historical and sociocultural documentaries and classic Black sitcoms. I'm a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., a wife to my best friend, a mama to one radiant daughter, a dog mom, and a caregiver in the sandwich generation—held up by strong women, deep friendships, and a whole lot of love.