



**Caring about the quality of your relationships.**  
**Brenda Montani, MSC. RCC**

## **A Relationship with Self... Forgiveness**

This is the first in a series of articles that addresses the issues of loving ourselves. Imagine that at our core is a human being with untold ability to love others as well as to love ourselves. That is the truth about each of us. Each of us was born with the capacity for immeasurable amounts of love and compassion. Unfortunately along the journey of life, this incredible potential was covered up, destroyed or at best minimized. We picked up self inflicted or other inflicted labels and expectations that robbed us of our ability to love ourselves with compassion and forgiveness. Western society has not focused on celebrating the potential we, as humans, have to be loving and compassionate. More of the focus has been on what we're not, what we don't have and what and how we should do things. Hopefully these articles will put an end to that trend for you.

The first requirement for self-love is self-forgiveness. As you know when you have forgiven someone who has hurt you it is not only healing for you but also for the other person. Forgiveness creates a softness of spirit and leaves an openness for new ways of being. You can feel a very positive shift when you forgive or are forgiven. Seldom do we think of forgiveness in terms of forgiving ourselves and it's time we did. Much time is spent in therapy being aware of areas where there has been no self-forgiveness.

Many of us are harder on ourselves about what we perceive to be past mistakes than we are on others. Somehow we lock in hard feelings (guilt, shame, recrimination) about ourselves and past events that lead us to believe that we are unworthy or bad. It's not untypical, even, for someone who has had something traumatic happen to him or her, (like sexual abuse or a family divorce) to blame themselves. This is not an intentional act. We repress the self-blaming feelings instead of healing them because we know no other way. We beat up on ourselves. Our self-judgments are often negative and destructive. In some way we see ourselves as undeserving and act this out by denying ourselves rights or privileges, the possibility of healthy relationships, celebration of our potential and a myriad of other things. Our inner voice is often self-critical and creates limitations in our lives.



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It's time to change this. As much as we need others to forgive us, we need to forgive ourselves.

To head in this direction take a look at what you might be holding against yourself or repeatedly beating yourself up for doing. We're often not even conscious of the past events that we haven't resolved and forgiven. They've just been woven into our negative beliefs about ourselves. It's time to be aware of and let go of those things that prevent us from celebrating ourselves. It's time to acknowledge that we are not perfect and nor were we meant to be. It's time to stop blaming, judging and criticizing ourselves. It's time to forgive ourselves, knowing that the alternative is limiting, hurtful and unproductive. Rather than looking at past mistakes as something that require punishment view them as opportunities to learn and grow. Make a list of all the negative things that have happened and assess your view of yourself in regards to these events. Are you still holding yourself in judgment of any of these events? Ask yourself what you would say to a daughter or son if they were in exactly the same situation. It's time to forgive yourself.

**TIP**

1. Write a list of those things you need to forgive yourself for (i.e. a certain mistake, divorcing. doing poorly in school, hurting someone, not being able to fix something etc.) The list is endless and very personal. Only you know what requires attention.
2. Rewrite each item on your list in the following way: I choose to truly forgive myself for \_\_\_\_\_ and to let go of this so that I can be the loving, compassionate person I am meant to be.
3. Reread these sentences out loud, daily, until they become the truth for you.