

REACH Forgiveness of Others

R = Recall the hurt.

To heal, you have to face the fact that you've been hurt. Make up your mind not to be snarky (i.e., nasty and hurtful), not to treat yourself like a victim, and not to treat the other person as a jerk. Make a decision to forgive. Decide that you are not going to pursue payback but you will treat the person as a valuable person.

E = Empathize with your partner.

Empathy is putting yourself in the other person's chair. Pretend that the other person is in an empty chair across from you. Talk to him. Pour your heart out. Then, when you've had your say, sit in his chair. Talk back to the imaginary you in a way that helps you see why the other person might have wronged you. This builds empathy, and even if you can't empathize, you might feel more sympathy, compassion, or love, which helps you heal from hurt. This allows you to give ...

A = Altruistic gift.

Give forgiveness as an unselfish, altruistic gift. We all can remember when we wronged someone—maybe a parent, teacher, or friend—and the person forgave us. We felt light and free. And we didn't want to disappoint that person by doing wrong again. By forgiving unselfishly, you can give that same gift to someone who hurt you.

C = Commit.

Once you've forgiven, write a note to yourself—something as simple as, "Today, I forgave [person's name] for hurting me." This helps your forgiveness last.

H = Hold onto forgiveness.

We write notes of commitment because we will almost surely be tempted to doubt that we really forgave. We can re-read our notes. We did forgive.