

Honest Exploration, Forgiveness, and Commitment (Steps 5–7)

12 Steps for Recovery from Adversity, Trauma, and Abuse (Part 2)

Pursuing Podcast Episode 6

April 8, 2019

Notes	
12 Steps for Recovery from Adversity, Trauma, and Abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. We admit that we are powerless over another's choices, behaviors, and commitment to healing, while recognizing and claiming the power we have over our own choices, behaviors, and healing.</i><i>2. We come to believe that there is within us an innate ability to heal and an inner knowing that can guide us on our healing journey.</i><i>3. We make a decision to trust in the process of healing.</i><i>4. We make a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves.</i><i>5. We acknowledge and admit the truth of the experience, our role in that experience, and the role of others involved.</i><i>6. We forgive ourselves for our role in this experience and make amends with ourselves as necessary. We forgive others for their role in this experience and release them to their own healing.</i><i>7. We fully commit to doing the work that is necessary for healing.</i>

	<p>8. <i>We honor our emotions by acknowledging them, allowing them, and accessing the information they hold.</i></p> <p>9. <i>We identify core beliefs that have led us to this place, challenge them, and change those that hinder our growth and healing.</i></p> <p>10. <i>We identify and restructure distorted thought patterns.</i></p> <p>11. <i>We commit to behaviors that are consistent with our healthier emotions, thoughts, and beliefs.</i></p> <p>12. <i>In our pursuit of progression, we continue to do our own work and bring awareness and support to others on their healing journey.</i></p>
<p>Step 5:</p>	<p><i>We acknowledge and admit the truth of the experience, our role in that experience, and the role of others involved.</i></p> <p>Main Points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Without an accurate assessment of the situation, it is difficult to know the best course of action for healing. It is critical that we get as unbiased information as possible to make an accurate assessment. 2. Our ability to accurately acknowledge our role in an experience is dependent upon our capacity to take the appropriate amount of responsibility, neither too much nor too little. It is a tendency for us to either take more responsibility than we should in a situation, which leads to frustration and despair, or not enough responsibility, which leads to an inability to fully heal because we've moved to blaming or ignoring. 3. Our ability to look at the truth of the role of others involved is tied to our willingness to (1) let go of personalizing the experience, (2) our need to blame, and (3) our need to write them as a certain character in our story and what type of explanatory style we use.

Details:

- Our brain is designed to organize any information it receives. This can be helpful and hurtful based on what is known as confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or hypotheses. Dr. Adi Jaffe (2018), in talking about confirmation bias, explained that, "Once a belief is established, our brains selectively pay attention to information that falls in line with our beliefs rather than information that contradicts- or expands- them" (p. 27).
- This is one of the biggest issues with the step in general—we really cannot fully know the entire truth of a situation, because we can only look at it through the lens of our perception, which is based upon our beliefs and experiences. It is important to realize that we must be as honest as possible and check our bias to ensure that we get as accurate assessment of the situation as possible to ensure we take the best course of action for our healing.
- Dr. Adi Jaffe (2018) in his book *Abstinence Myth* shared the first principle of his approach to recovery as Honest Exploration. He says: "Honest exploration involves looking into the life experiences that have brought you to this point, because you can't address what you are not aware of. Done in a judgment-free, supportive manner, this exploration can uncover damaging beliefs, unhelpful thought patterns or habits, and unrealistic expectations. For so many of the people I work with, this process takes time, but once completed it forever changes their perception of the actual struggle (p. 79).
- Shame resilience is critical for this step.
 - Brene Brown identified the four elements of shame resilience:
 - Recognizing Shame and understanding its triggers
 - Practicing critical awareness (reality check, challenge)
 - Reaching out
 - Speaking shame (talk about what you feel and ask for what you need)
- Shame is a focus on self, guilt is a focus on behavior. Shame is "I am bad." Guilt is "i did something bad."

- Guilt is an uncomfortable feeling, but it is helpful. In comparing guilt and shame, Brown (2012) said, “The psychological discomfort, something similar to cognitive dissonance, is what motivates meaningful change. Guilt is just as powerful as shame, but its influence is positive, while shame’s is destructive. In fact, in my research I found that shame corrodes the very part of us that believes we can change and do better” (p. 72).
- It is critical for us to understand in this statement that what makes guilt a positive influence is when it leads to change. Guilt is an emotion that is intended to trigger action. When we swim in it, do nothing with it, and eventually identify with it is when it can become toxic and will likely move into shame.
- “Healing doesn’t happen by changing our core personality or hiding the parts of ourselves we deem ‘flaws.’ Healing occurs through self-acceptance. Through loving ourselves whole, shadow and all” (Rising Women–Instagram).
- “Owning our story can be hard, but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light” (Brown, 2012).
- Dr. Fred Luskin (2002), the director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Projects, explains in his book, *Forgive for Good*, that there are three core components that underlie the creation of long-standing hurt and grievances that need forgiveness:
 - The exaggerated taking of personal offence
 - The blaming of the offender for how you feel
 - The creation of a grievance story
- “You can never know exactly why another person has acted cruelly. You can never know for sure why you feel angry or upset. You never know any other person’s thoughts. You are also not privy to each of the painful things that have happened to a person who hurt you. You cannot know if the actions this person committed were meant to hurt you. You can’t know which of the things in your past is actually influencing your experience today. You can only feel your hurt and offer a hypothesis as to why you’re in pain” (Luskin, 2002, p. 23).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story can come in when we try to fill in the blanks based on our pain and our beliefs (bias). The main purpose of our story is to help us understand what happened. • As we are telling our current story, we are writing our next one. • “Honest exploration shines a light on our previously dark path. Radical honesty allows us to walk along it to move forward” (Jaffe, 2018, p. 81).
<p>Step 6</p>	<p><i>We forgive ourselves for our role in this experience and make amends with ourselves as necessary. We forgive others for their role in this experience and release them to their own healing.</i></p> <p>Main Points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding what forgiveness is and what it is not, who it is for, and when it is best given is critical for it to be real and effective. 2. Forgiveness is a choice of letting go. Letting go means loss, and loss means there will be grief. Processing grief is integral in our ability to forgive. 3. Forgiveness is a process that allows us to let go of our past to heal our present. 4. For healing to be complete, there must be forgiveness. <p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiveness is a choice. It is not something that just happens and it is not a feeling. Forgiveness is an action. • Forgiveness is not about allowing or condoning behavior. • Forgiveness is not forgetting that something painful happened or minimizing the hurt. • Forgiveness is taking responsibility for your feelings. • Forgiveness is about freedom to let go and move forward. • Forgiveness is for the person doing the forgiving. • Forgive yourself and make amends when needed. • Forgiveness is best given in full truth and after the emotions of grief have been processed so it is real and complete. • If forgiveness is needed, an offense has happened, which means a loss has occurred. . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loss of relationship ○ Loss of trust ○ Loss of expectation or hope (need or rules)

- If we cannot forgive, it is because we cannot let go of something.
 - There is a benefit or pay-off
 - It allows us to hang on when we aren't ready to let go
 - It allows us to keep our feelings to maintain a story (victim)
 - A need (energetic)
 - A need for justice (can't control what happens to other people)
 - A need for things to be fair
 - A need to control
- “There is an enormous physical burden to being hurt and disappointed,” says Karen Swartz, M.D., director of the Mood Disorders Adult Consultation Clinic at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and immune response . Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and diabetes, among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health.
- Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, blood pressure , and levels of anxiety, depression and stress.”
- Getting ready to forgive:
 - Know what your feelings are about what happened
 - Be clear about the action that wronged you
 - Share your experience with a couple of trusted people
- Steps to forgiveness:
 - Take hurts less personally
 - Take responsibility for how you feel
 - Tell a story of redemption rather than a grievance story
- Once are ready to forgive fully and make that choice, seal it with an action. If you don't feel you can talk to the person who wronged you, write about your forgiveness in a journal or even talk about it to someone else in your life whom you trust.
- For healing to be complete, there must be forgiveness.

<p>Step 7</p>	<p><i>We fully commit to doing the work that is necessary for healing.</i></p> <p>Main Points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is great power in commitment to propel us forward on our healing path. 2. Full healing is best attained when healing is addressed on all four levels: emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual (energetic). <p>Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits to oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.” –William Hutchison Murray ● This commit to healing on all four levels or in all four bodies: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taking care of ourselves physically ○ Examining our thoughts ○ Sitting with and separating from our emotions ○ Identifying negative beliefs and shift those ○ Connecting to the divine ● “With frequently and a little bit The candle of change is lit. Replacing any negative thoughts, Decide, Commit, then do it!” (Marilyn Beecher Thaxton)
<p>Action Items</p>	<p>Begin to work through steps five, six, and seven:</p> <p><i>5. We acknowledge and admit the truth of the experience, our role in that experience, and the role of others involved.</i></p> <p><i>6. We forgive ourselves for our role in this experience and make amends with ourselves as necessary. We forgive others for their role in this experience and release them to their own healing.</i></p> <p><i>7. We fully commit to doing the work that is necessary for healing.</i></p>

Sources	<p>Brown, B. (2012). <i>Daring greatly</i>. New York, NY: Avery.</p> <p>Jaffe, A. (2018). <i>The abstinence myth</i>. Los Angeles, CA: IGNTD Press.</p> <p>Luskin, F. (2002). <i>Forgive for good: A proven prescription for health and happiness</i>. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.</p> <p>Swartz, K. (2019). <i>Forgiveness: Your health depends on it</i>. The John Hopkins University. Retrieved from: https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/forgiveness-your-health-depends-on-it</p>
----------------	--