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## IMMACULEE'S STORY

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THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

**Forgiveness**

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## WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER.....

"God does not forgive because he has never condemned. And there must be condemnation before forgiveness is necessary. Forgiveness is the great need of this world, but that is because it is a world of illusions. Those who forgive are thus releasing themselves from illusions, while those who withhold forgiveness are binding themselves to them. As you condemn only yourself, so do you forgive only yourself." – ACIM Lesson 46

I was sitting in a circle with twenty people I had never laid eyes on. Three days before, I had been served divorce papers and asked to leave my house and family. The previous 18 years, I had spent drinking and drugging in order to mask the fear I felt inside. I had become someone I never set out to be. The people I was seated with were all there for a beginners meeting of a 12-step recovery group. Seated immediately to my right was the moderator. The topic he brought up was resentment. He then gave his opinion and feelings on resentment and asked the group to share, beginning with the person to his right. I sat there for the hour that the meeting lasted, feeling as if I were going to break down at any moment. As each person shared their resentments, which were about their families, employers, spouses or significant others, I felt more and more isolated. My biggest resentment was with myself, and nobody shared that. The hour was up before I ever got my chance. I went up to the moderator afterward and shared with him, and he smiled and said he had hoped someone would bring that up.

I was so filled with self-loathing and hate within, that I consistently contemplated suicide. Gratefully, there was enough of a spark left inside, that I was open to listening to people God set in my path. One man spent hours with me, and helped me to understand that what I had chosen to do in the past was simply my best attempt to feel good, based upon the knowledge that I had at the time.

And God found me "not guilty".

It was my self-judgment that perpetuated the constant ego based illusion I was living. In time, I found forgiveness of myself, which opened the door to forgiveness of others. Knowing today that each action a person takes is their best attempt at feeling good, helps me to understand and relate. Each experience that comes my way, that perhaps is not something I am comfortable with, gives me an opportunity to wallow in resentment or to forgive. This is only as difficult as we choose it to be.

May we all use this life experience for-giving and not so much for getting. Namaste' Clyde

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Our Theme for the Next Issue...

# Transition

# IMMACULEE'S STORY

By T.C. Brown

**I**mmaculee Ilibagiza shivered as she stood before the man who had butchered her mother and one of her brothers, remembering that while she was in hiding it was his voice she had heard taunting, calling her name as he hunted for her in hope of killing her, too.

"I have killed 399 cockroaches," the man bragged to a vicious mob, unaware that Immaculee was so close, hidden on the other side of a wall. "Immaculee will make 400. It's a good number to kill

This killer, once a successful, well-dressed businessman whose children Immaculee had played with in happier times, now crouched before her outside of his Rwandan prison cell, dirty, emaciated, bruised and battered, bare feet covered in open sores and eyes encrusted with a milky film.

Tears streamed down Immaculee's face as the jailer yelled at the man who was too ashamed to even look at her. She cried as she thought of the evil that had taken his soul, understanding that he would live in torment forever for the murders he had committed of so many innocent people during the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Feelings of pity washed over Immaculee as the killer sobbed at her feet. Writing about the experience later, Immaculee said: "I could feel his shame. He looked up at me for only a moment, but our eyes met. I reached out, touched his hands lightly, and quietly said what I'd come to say. 'I forgive you.'"

The jailer, Semana, a politically powerful man, was astounded and infuriated. He thought Immaculee would question the man; maybe even spit on him. But forgive him?

"Forgiveness is all I have to offer," Immaculee wrote in a book that recounts her terrifying yet extraordinary experiences during the 100 days that Hutu tribesmen slaughtered 1 million fellow countrymen who were of Tutsi ancestry.

In *Left to Tell, Discovering God amidst the Rwanda Holocaust*, Immaculee with the help of writer Steve Erwin relives the trauma and horrors she experienced with seven other Tutsi women as they cowered in silence and terror for 91 days in a closet-sized bathroom of a local pastor's home. They were hiding from mobs of blood-lusting Hutus wielding machetes and bent on wiping out every last Tutsi in Rwanda. Immaculee's own father, mother and two of her three brothers were murdered.



Immaculee's story is a tale of strength, courage and resilience and an amazing lesson for all about the power and importance of finding forgiveness in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. This woman, in the midst of a sure, torturous death, discovered the path to deep spirituality and unconditional love. Surrounded by the insane hate and blood lust that fueled genocide, Immaculee somehow managed to forge a powerful connection to God that helped her not only overcome the hate of murderous mobs, but also allowed her to conquer the anger attacking her own heart. In this way, she was led to forgiveness, even for those who murdered her family.

In a recent interview, Immaculee said the deep sorrow she feels at the loss of her family continues today and she expects it will never be erased, but she said it was critical for her own soul to find forgiveness in her heart, onerous as that task might be.

"I had so many doubts but what helped me was being able to trust God," Immaculee says. "I didn't blame God. God was watching what I was going through and he held me under his wings. It took me from where I was in anger and showed me the truth."

Immaculee says she wanted to forgive the man who murdered her mother and brother when she saw him after his arrest, but she was nervous and unsure about their meeting.

"When I was there I didn't know how I would react to him," Immaculee remembers. "It wasn't like I was trying to be good. It brought me to tears right away. I cried thinking 'How could his happen? Why did you do this?' And I realized this person is suffering from his own decisions."

Immaculee's boundless capacity to forgive the man had a powerful and unexpected effect on the jailer Semana that Immaculee only discovered a year later.

"I had thought he was mad at me, that I was weak because I had forgiven this killer," Immaculee says. "He told me he changed by seeing me forgive that guy. He used to beat prisoners, that is how he dealt with pain and he would hurt them.

"He found relief after he saw what I did," Immaculee says. "He told me he never knew that there was another way of reacting."

Semana's response is typical for those who have heard or read about Immaculee, yet those reactions continue to surprise this unassuming woman. Her story provokes tears and often she is told that it has prompted people to reach out to heal a soured relationship with a long, lost loved one. Immaculee often hears that her experiences provide perspective and renew faith.

"I am always surprised and thank God," Immaculee says.

Those reactions may also be the very answer to the question Immaculee is most often asked – "Why were you saved?"

It's a natural enough query after people learn of Immaculee's miraculous escape from the hell and torment that resulted in the slaughter of so many of her countrymen. It's a question she has wrestled with also, and the answer she's reached goes much deeper than sharing with the world her first-hand experience of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide.

"At first, I didn't know why I was saved," Immaculee says. "But I was being saved from the anger that was killing me. Being mad at someone feeds your pride. It feels good, but it is like eating fire or poison."

And she believes she was saved to "tell what happened and to tell people how God cares for them in their darkest hour."

Though she was raging inside, Immaculee found a way to break through the veil of anger that she had come to see as a distortion of truth about her fellow human beings.

"When you don't forgive, your mind is clouded and you can't see the truth," Immaculee says. "You are painting a picture of another person that you think is true, but it is not really."

But caution can and should be a companion of forgiveness, too, she says.

"Forgiving does not mean you embrace them. It's hard to embrace somebody who has done wrong to you," Immaculee says. "You cannot be a victim twice or three times. Forgiving is letting go of anger and being able to pray and bless that person and being able to wish them good.

"Don't confuse it that the person has changed because you forgave them," Immaculee cautions. "If the person has not converted and apologized from the heart, I would not trust them of course. But you can still love people and try to only see the best in them, even if you don't trust them."

All one need do is ask God for help.

"Don't think it is all your effort, it is God's," Immaculee says. "As soon as you wish to do it, it can happen because it is the only thing God is waiting for you to do."

In grasping the challenging lessons of unconditional love and forgiveness, Immaculee took a long, arduous road that most of us will never, thankfully, experience.

She was born in a land she called paradise – Rwanda, a small, beautiful, mountainous country in central Africa the size of Maryland. She was raised in the village of Mataba in western Rwanda and lived in a house overlooking Lake Kivu.

Her father Leonard and mother Marie Rose, devout Catholics, were both teachers who instilled the golden rule in their children. Both parents were known in their community for their good works.

Immaculee had three siblings, all boys: two older brothers, Aimable and Damascene and a younger brother, Vianney. Immaculee was a happy child, unaware of clouds on the horizon until she was 10 years old at a school for older children outside of her mother's schoolhouse.

On her first day, the teacher barked out an ethnic roll call, ordering all Tutsis to stand. As Immaculee looked around in confusion, the teacher ordered her out of the room with instructions to return only when "you know what you are!"

Immaculee's parents had not taught their children about the ethnic divisions in Rwanda: a majority Hutu tribe, the minority Tutsi tribe and a small contingent of Twa, tiny forest dwellers. Everyone had always been welcome in their home.

The tribes had co-existed peacefully, but were turned into a discriminatory society by German and Belgian colonialists, creating division and animosity.

In the wake of a bloody uprising in which 100,000 Tutsis were killed, Hutus took over the government in 1962. Over the ensuing years, they brutalized and killed many Tutsis.

During Immaculee's third year at National University in Butare while she was home on Easter break, Rwanda's Hutu president was killed when his plane was shot down. It was April 7, 1994 and the Tutsis were blamed. The genocide began.

Immaculee's family huddled around the radio, frightened by reports that Hutu citizens were joining government soldiers and local militia groups to kill Tutsis. Even the radio stations encouraged Hutus to grab machetes and attack.

Within days, the Hutu militia attacked Immaculee's village and her family watched in horror from afar as they trapped one villager, circling him slowly until they moved in, chopping at him with machetes. That scene was repeated countless times throughout the country. As militias closed in, Immaculee's father ordered her to a local pastor's house to hide until the situation calmed down.

"Remember, Immaculee, I will come get you myself," he told her. It was his final words to her.

*Immaculee's Story... Continued on page 42*

# A SPOONFUL OF POISON

BY EVSTTARR

**"WE ARE EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF OUR EXPERIENCES." — LOUISE HAY**

**H**ow many of us take 100% responsibility for our lives 100% of the time?

Well, I can tell you that I spent a portion of my life living in the victim neighborhood, riding the victim mobile. The only language that I knew was victimonics.

Thank God, I've since moved out of that neighborhood, although I must say I ride through it once in awhile. For the most part, since I started my spiritual journey that has spanned over three decades I've learned a great deal about the importance of taking responsibility for your own actions. It's a tough pill for some of us to swallow. As some of you may be aware, I teach the works of Louise Hay who is known in the metaphysical world for the association between your thoughts and your body and/or life.

One of the key points of Louise's work is forgiving the self and others. In the Louise Hay group that I teach we spend the first seven weeks working on *forgiveness*. Let me ask you this, *IF* you indeed did recognize that you and you alone are entirely responsible for your actions and your life, then wouldn't it seem that you wouldn't have the need to forgive anyone but yourself? After all, blaming another person isn't taking responsibility for your life, so the only person to forgive would be you.

How many of you blame your boss for your unsubstantial pay, or your mother for your dysfunctional relationship beliefs, or the government for the state of affairs the world is in, or the dogs for messing up the carpet? You have a choice in everything you do and how your *respond* to the hand that is dealt you, after all *you* picked the cards. Am I making myself clear?

Forgiving oneself and others is the ticket to love, happiness, prosperity and all the other wonderful things waiting for us in this Kingdom of ours. It's up to us whether we want to claim these magnificent gifts now, or come back several hundred lifetimes until we finally understand that love and forgiveness go hand in hand like peanut butter and jelly. It's a waste of time and energy playing the blame game, and I'm willing to bet the bank you have better things to do with your time.

*"When you forgive, you in no way change the past – but you sure do change the future."* ~ Bernard Meltzer

I'd like you to appease me now and grab a hand mirror out of the bathroom, go ahead, I'll wait. Now that you have mirror in hand, look straight into your eyes and say, *"I forgive you."* Scary, huh? It gets scarier. Now look into the mirror and say, *"I love and accept you."* If you did this faithfully for five minutes a day I guarantee your world will start to change. Don't believe me? Stop any of my former Louise Hay students and ask them about their results. An amazing thing will start to happen; as you love and forgive yourself more, you will automatically find that you are less judgmental of the people and situations around you.

*"There is overwhelming evidence that the higher the level of self-esteem, the more likely one will be to treat others with respect, kindness and generosity."*

~ Nathaniel Branden

Some of you may be saying right now that there is no way you can forgive so and so for what s/he did. You may even have had some of the most inhumane things happen to you. They may be punishable by law. We all have our stories. According to *The Course in Miracles*, there is no degree of pain – pain is pain is pain. So you won't be winning any Emmys for the most unforgivable story of all. You may get a shot on Montel but that's about it. Like it or not, we are responsible for our lives. Hence, if we are still holding on to even a smidgen of blame or victim-hood we need to forgive.

OK, so you can't even begin to imagine where to start. Start with saying, "I am willing to forgive." I think we can agree that even the most unforgivable person can start with the willingness to forgive. When I'm having trouble with forgiveness in my own world I look back at Jesus and think how he forgave all those people, even the ones who hung



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him to the cross and hammered nails into his hands and feet. He also forgave Judas who betrayed him and countless others.

*"Be assured that if you knew all, you would pardon all."*  
~ Thomas A. Kempis

I like to relay a story about forgiveness in my classes. It goes like this: You are married for 25 years. You put your husband through medical school, raised five children and gave him the best years of your life. One day he comes home and tells you he's running off with his 21-year-old blonde secretary. You happen to see them riding down the street in his new convertible Porsche, his cutesy secretary by his side. Her blonde hair is blowing in the wind; they're both smiling and laughing.

Now, you spend your every waking moment angry, miserable, depressed and thinking of 101 ways to murder your ex-husband. Let me ask you this, who is the happy one and who is miserable?

*"Resentment (unforgiveness) is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die."* ~ Malachy McCourt

*Evstarr's spiritual journey has taken her coast-to-coast studying the various schools of thought. Check out her new cable TV show Reach for the Moon with Evstarr and her website reachforthemoon.net for latest class listings or to be added to her mailing list. Contact her at: Evstarr@yahoo.com for speaking engagements and your spring/summer weddings.*



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# Messages Of Love - It's not for her, it's for you



By Laura Lee

The sun's glare blinded my vision. As I made my way across the road, I squinted to see if the others had already arrived. It appeared unusually quiet considering it was a Friday night. I was the first to arrive at the restaurant and chose the corner table on the outside deck, which was perfectly suited to people watch.

"Laura!" my friend Sophie shouted from across the street. Pushing my chair away from the table, I stood eagerly awaiting to embrace my friend. As I did, another set of arms belonging to my friend Lynn, wrapped around me.

There wasn't a quiet moment after we gathered. Even the waiter went unnoticed while menus, water and bread miraculously appeared before us. It wasn't long before night settled in and we had talked about everything from work, family, money and simply life in general.

It was in the last hour of our reunion that I realized we weren't alone in our discussion. A woman sitting with her back toward us had eavesdropped in on our conversation. She was so damn obvious about it that I was distracted. At this point, she turned toward Sophie and interrupted our conversation.

"Excuse me miss," she said, "Your accent...is it British?"

Sophie turned from our discussion to address her inquiry. Meanwhile, Lynn and I continued our conversation still distracted by what we overheard going on the other side of our table. Her simple words became instantly dark.

"The girls you are having dinner with are bad people. They..."

Is she talking about me?...Do I know her?

I looked around the table to see the others' reactions. They appeared just as taken by this woman's words as I. My blood pressure rose. It felt like a warrior drum beating within my chest. Sophie appeared captivated it was like she was in a hypnotic trance. The woman continued the nightmare by degrading my friend and me. Lynn turned her chair to understand if she was really hearing what she thought she heard. She joined in on the dialog. It was then that I saw a girl's spirit appear above the woman's shoulders. She looked to be near my age and extremely thin with over dyed hair. The spirit stood near the woman as if she were her daughter.



She turned to me and commanded, "Don't believe a word this woman is saying."

How can I not?

"She doesn't know what she says," while stroking her mother's head.

What? Her intentions seem purely hateful...

"She is from the streets," She points to the shopping bags beside her. I hadn't noticed them till now.

And soooooooooooooo...

"You can't even comprehend the loneliness she bares, the incredible sadness of losing her family. She lost me to the world when I took my life. Her family blamed her for my mistakes. The despair she burdens is so grand that it led her to soul search while wandering the streets."

The daughter placed her hand upon the woman's shoulder. The street lady's face appeared distressed, contorted; she continued to add fuel to the fire. My head spun.

Why is this happening?

"She is full of rage, this is her release," the spirit replied. "I've been following to help her awaken but she hasn't heard my call...."

Right...

"Don't take it personally," she shrugged.

I felt a warming sensation break through the exterior of my heart.

"Send her blessings," she coaxed gently.

Uh, that's a bit much!

"Trust me. Send her love..."

*She doesn't deserve it.*

"It's not for her; it's for you."

How so?

"Release the negative energy from your heart," she said. "Besides that, she won't leave until you forgive her."

In that case...Help me.

Within moments, my heart melted and I felt love break through. It was enough to send forth to this woman. I was guided to telepathically tell her that she was safe and loved. Furthermore, I shared that I forgave her. A moment hadn't passed before her face changed from harsh features to a soft glow that seemed to have captured the candlelight from our table.

"Thank you."



Her daughter's gratitude gave me goose bumps." The lady grabbed her bags, stood and said, "Well ladies, my girlfriends never did show for dinner. I best be on my way. Good evening."

The girls appeared stunned by her sudden change in demeanor. I was shocked, disbelieving really, as she made her way past our table and wandered into the street. Her daughter followed her like a guardian angel. I stood to see them off. As I did, they disappeared into the night. I looked up the street, down the street, across the street...they were nowhere to be found.

I plopped back into my seat dazed and confused. My friends wanted to relive our whole ordeal. Their giggles regarding our experience went past me; my heart couldn't bear to participate. I felt I no longer had the fuel. I was in awe of the transformation in my soul.



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# Forgiveness

By T.C. Brown

*“And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” —The Lord’s Prayer*

*“Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.” —Mark Twain*

Oh, what a mountain whose name is Forgiveness. It looms before me, challenging an ascent with steepness and obstacles, its seemingly insurmountable pitch wearing down my desire to try to reach its summit. Even when I muster the courage to ascend (for after all, it is the right thing to do, no?) there is no guarantee I will remain its conqueror if I reach the pinnacle.

Being able to find forgiveness through a fog of anger and hurt after someone has wronged me is, hands down, one of the most difficult tasks in life. But I also know it is one of the most worthwhile attributes to obtain. Every great spiritual leader cites forgiveness as a critical foundation for reaching a life of grace and peace. From Jesus’ teachings of “turn the other cheek” to Gandhi’s exhortation that “the weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong,” teachers have taught that forgiveness, though not easy, is the only way to obtain permanent peace of mind. That message rings true, doesn’t it?

Instinctively, I know those words of wisdom should be followed. The knowing part I’ve got down. It’s in the doing that I run into trouble. That hang up comes straight from my ego, the oft cantankerous part of me that remains in constant red alert for any sign of offense. Ego would purge the concept “forgiveness” from its lexicon. Ego merrily drives a stake through the heart of forgiveness any chance it gets. I know. I’ve worked my way through a forest of stakes.

It seems to me that the first steps on the ascent to forgiveness start with true awareness of the hurt and anger churning inside. When I’m totally identified with the pain—pain is me, I am pain—that’s not awareness. That’s unconsciousness and I’m just looking to swat at the cause. But when I can find a way to look deeper and step out of my hurt self—no longer be the pain that blankets my thoughts and feelings—I have cracked open the door to the possibility of calming down and allowing forgiveness to slip through to my heart. That movement can be aided by compassion and the realization that those who hurt us are often operating out of fear—they are frightened, perhaps, of losing something in their own lives.

One huge obstacle for me, and a major element that

fuels my resistance to forgive, is my need to be right. When I can surrender that need (another major challenge and a topic for another day), the flames tend to die down. Of course, it’s easier to forgive a small hurt, a kind of no-harm-no-foul brand of forgiveness. Dealing with major issues of pain and anger, however, is an entirely different ballgame.

Unfortunately, in regard to one person, I’ve been in a continuing cycle of pain, anger and an inability to find lasting forgiveness for more than 21 years. That just seems crazy, doesn’t it? To be at odds with someone for so long seems shameful. I can’t totally blame her, though I have at times. We have every reason to bury the hatchet (interesting analogy that it is) if for no other fact than that we are the parents of beautiful, grounded twins, who turned out surprisingly well despite the immature, selfish emotions of their parents.

Over the years I’ve come to believe that I have been able to forgive this person and at times I’ve reached out to try to heal the wounds. “Everything is OK. I’m moving on,” I’ve thought. The past should live in the past. But when my efforts were rebuffed or ignored, or when my buttons were unexpectedly pushed, the anger that I thought had long disappeared would bubble up from somewhere deep inside and roll over the sentiments of forgiveness like hot lava, obliterating all thoughts of peace and love.

Though these situations rarely arise now, I’m always left with an empty feeling when they do and a depressing sense that I have failed myself, her and more importantly, my children. Those emotions help me understand that this person is probably my best teacher and my biggest challenge in learning how to turn the other cheek, and in practice, becoming a better person. Truth be told, though I feel like forgiveness reigns now, I’m not confident of its permanence. But I do understand my efforts are a work in progress, with a never-ending desire to reach the goal of true forgiveness. I know I am at least farther along up that mountain.

Grasping these realizations is of utmost importance. For how can I possibly expect to ever be forgiven by anyone if I am unwilling to find forgiveness within my own heart?

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# Forgiveness...The Key to the Kingdom

By Cindy Hauska

Forgiveness is something we do for ourselves to *experience* the truth of God's unconditional love as opposed to reading about it, believing in it or holding it in mind as a concept. It doesn't become real for us until we put it into action in the physical plane. It's relaxing and peaceful to ponder forgiveness but it will never bring us to experience our forgiving natures until we take specific action. It is in the action of self expression that we can see and feel ourselves being the unconditionally loving spiritualized humans that we are; the God within issuing forth to heal the world. Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, et al., came to show us the inherent power we contain within, and how we can experience it as a relative truth in the here and now. Their messages all pointed to the power that lies in forgiveness.

When we understand that at a quantum level there is no separation in the world of form there is only one Self, then we can know that all forgiveness issues are Self-forgiveness issues. The entire world is our reflection and everyone in it mirrors the One Self of Being-ness. The Lord's Prayer says, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The *Course in Miracles* states that our only purpose here on earth is to forgive our brothers. At the core of all religions is the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Life is 'for giving.' If you are experiencing any personal issues, be they physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, I invite you to enter into your heart of hearts where the power of true forgiveness was placed in storage for you to give away. As you do that, you can know the truth and freedom that lies in Jesus' words to love your brother as your 'Self.' There, at that place, we enter into a deeper understanding of forgiveness.

Self-forgive-

ness lies at the heart of all healing. Self-forgiveness promotes genuine unions. Self-forgiveness is the freedom, the liberation we have been searching for all our lives. How could I know my Self to be forgiving and experience liberation unless some gentle soul had volunteered to come into my life and give me a reason to experience my Self as a forgiving Being? When I recognize this, I can see those that showed up were people playing out their roles, helping to develop my character in the area of forgiveness.


Where the doors of opportunity seem to be locked, the key to unlock them is forgiveness. At first it may seem like we need to forgive 'others,' then we can move into forgiving ourselves; then we may enter into the space of knowing that there is no 'other' to forgive. There is only Self, I AM, and in that space forgiveness takes on a whole new dimension. Through *that* level of Self-love and Self-forgiveness we can actually experience the unconditional love of God coming *through* ourselves. THAT is freedom, the entry through the door to the Kingdom.



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## FORGIVE & FORGET

BY JANEK KUTA-ILIANO

It is hard to imagine ourselves aging. Inevitably, each and every one of us is growing older. However, the way our bodies respond to this reality varies among cultures.

For many in the industrial world, our aging is a source of grief and anxiety. Aging is something to fear and fight against. John Robbins in his book *Healthy at 100* states that rather than seeing our later years as a time of harvesting, growth and maturity, we fear that the deterioration of our health will so greatly impair our lives that to live a long life might be more of a curse than a blessing. For the most part, our society views the elderly as frail, increasingly senile and seemingly unhappy. As a result, rather than looking forward to growing old, we dread each passing birthday.

As the mainstream media continue to place a strong emphasis on staying young, many of us are out there doing whatever it takes to keep those dreaded wrinkles at bay. While in other cultures, wrinkles are a sign of wisdom, given much respect.

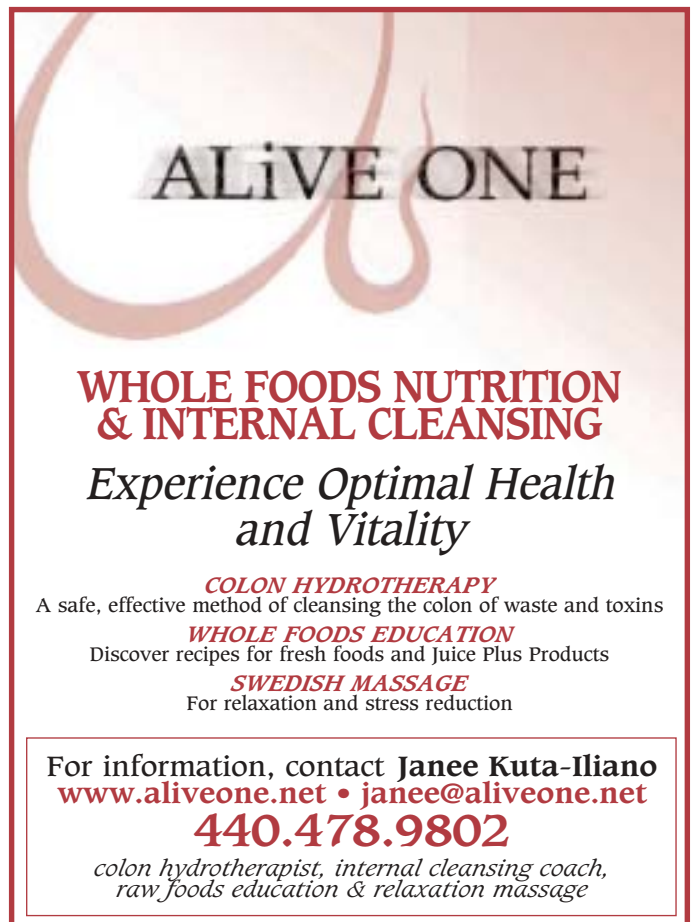
When we are young, we don't think much of what it will be like to get old or sick. We feel omnipotent over the natural process of aging. When we are young we work incessantly because we have the energy to do so. We skip meals, live on caffeine, eat on the run and neglect our body's need for relaxation because other priorities like work and family take precedence. Negative lifestyle choices appear to have little effect on us when our health is seemingly "good." But what about 10 years from now? The body can only forgive for so long. Will your current lifestyle support you 10, 20 years from now?

Life is going faster than we can even see and the disease process is taking effect much earlier than it has ever before. It is not uncommon these days to see young men and women diagnosed with cancer and degenerative conditions. Certain cancers that were originally seen in 60-year-olds are now being seen in those 30-something. Unfortunately, the situation is only getting worse.

When you start to read about other cultures around the world, you see that people are not suffering from the same western diseases our society is afflicted with. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other degenerative conditions are extraordinarily low in other parts of the world. What is going on in our country that isn't happening in other parts of the world?

Often times, we play off the disease and aging process as if it were something that is out of our control. Our genes and the environment are often thought of as the main offenders while overlooking how our lifestyle contributes to the malaise of the body. I am in awe of the body's ability to be so forgiving to what we subject ourselves to.

For as long as you are living, what is the quality of your life? I most certainly do not wish to live a long life if it does not include swimming, gardening, laughing with loved ones and delighting in children and nature. As I continue to appreciate the wonderful machinery that is inside me, all the many processes my body goes through each day to keep me moving and grooving, the easier it is to take care of myself. I have seen with my own eyes the power of good



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Janee Kuta-Iliano is a preventative health advocate and director of ALiVE ONE whose purpose is to empower others to take control of their health. She is an internal cleansing coach, offering relaxation massage, Colon Hydrotherapy and raw foods education. Visit her website at: [www.aliveone.net](http://www.aliveone.net). For more information contact Janee at: 440-478-9802 or [janee@aliveone.net](mailto:janee@aliveone.net).


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# PENANCE FROM MOTHER EARTH

BY LISA PINKERTON

The desire to forgive and be forgiven is human; it's natural. It's that mental, emotional and spiritual desire to put an end to resentment and anger against another. Scientists want to know if animals can forgive; they're pretty certain plants can't. So does that leave humans incapable of receiving forgiveness from planet earth, the one thing above all others we have collectively and knowingly sinned against?

Mother Earth can't say, "I forgive you." She's moving on and putting the whole thing behind her anyway. She's adapting. Global climate change is the prime example of planetary reaction to our action of emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than the planet can probably handle. Who knows, maybe the increases in hurricanes, famines and tsunamis predicted for this century are a passive aggressive way to stop us humans from creating more environmental degradation. The earth's possible attempts to limit the human population are a very cynical view to say the least, but it's not out of the realm of possibility.

The earth has been through ice ages and droughts before, but many today say it's the human race and the Indus-

trial Revolution that's accelerating these occurrences. This may be Mother Earth's only capacity to forgive us. We shouldn't resent her for it. She's only doing what she must do to survive. We are a mere blip on the radar screen compared to how long the earth has been around and will continue to exist.

Do we deserve this treatment? Maybe, but that's for you to decide on your own. If you do feel slight pangs of guilt for how our race has treated our most precious natural resource you're not helpless. Those of us with an emotional need to be forgiven by the planet can fulfill that need in other ways.

This desire to be forgiven by Mother Earth for how our kind has treated her doesn't happen over night. Instead, it gradually builds as the knowledge of environmental degradation and the collective guilt behind it accumulate. It might begin mildly with a sorrowful shake of the head over the oil spill half a world away. Then it might build to cursing a politician who can't see how saving the planet is going to help win another election. Next, we might honk our car horns and frown at a passing Hummer, guzzling less than eight miles

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per gallon on the highway. Until one day, walking a street in downtown Cleveland, we see a pedestrian throw a paper cup at a garbage can, miss, stop, think about picking it up and then decide not to.


That's when a passive guilty conscience becomes an active seeker of forgiveness. That's when one chooses to confront their fellow man and challenge his blatant decision to litter. There's a charge you feel knowing the environmental crime didn't go unrecognized and that possibly the next time that person thinks about littering he'll think of you instead. Many environmentalists have stories like this one and the psychological high that comes along with it is the same as helping an old lady with her groceries.

This charge is a reward from the spirit because its goal is to promote social equilibrium in all things. A world where one side takes and doesn't give in return is unbalanced and not sustainable. So here are some tips to help you along the path toward forgiveness.

- Pick up that piece of litter you see sitting near the trash can
- Plant vegetables either in the ground or in pots and discover the joy of harvesting vegetables without the need for pesticides or long distance trucking.
- Insulate your house and replace old windows to lose less heat.
- Plant a tree
- Inflate your tires and use less gas
- Ride your bike to work or run errands
- Shop second hand stores for the things you need before buying new.
- Resist throwing away bottles at restaurants that don't recycle. Instead, ask the management why it chooses not to recycle. Offer your help and be persistent.
- And for the love of the planet, RECYCLE AT HOME!

Try at least one of these things in the next month, notice how it makes you feel, then reflect. Because whether you call it karma or sinning, the guilt some of us feel for how humanity has treated this earth can be heavy and sub-

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conscious. Trying one of these tips or your own ideas may relieve you in a way you didn't know you needed.

We are the only ones who can make changes in our world; politicians and corporations can't be depended on. If we fail, Mother Nature may continue her own version of forgiveness, possibly changing our planet to one that's less inhabitable to those who've abused her kindness. For that we shouldn't be resentful. The earth is doing what it has to survive; it will outlast us.

I would rather be actively doing something to ease my transgressions rather than waste my life pretending my actions can't make a difference. The movement to a responsible, more sustainable culture is in our hands. It's in your hands. Do you need forgiveness?

That's when we begin seeking forgiveness; even through many of us don't see it as such. Many of us see participation in clean-up excursions, buying sustainable products and working to modify how others treat the earth as simply the right thing to do. But deep inside our psyches a healing is taking place.

Perhaps the more pain and guilt one feels for humanity and the planet the more apt one is to seek restitution. Instead of sitting on the sidelines and lamenting the condition of the planet, a growing number of people are taking action to rectify the situation.

When seeking forgiveness from Mother Earth, the penitence doesn't have to fit the crime because the crime is often too far removed from the person seeking to be absolved.

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# PLANETARY PATHWAYS

By Evstarr

**May:** Full Moon in Scorpio May 2<sup>nd</sup> 6:09 am/Blue Moon May 31<sup>st</sup> Sagittarius 9:04pm; New Moon in Taurus May 16<sup>th</sup> 3:27pm

**June:** New Moon in Gemini June 14<sup>th</sup> 11:13pm; Full Moon in Capricorn June 30<sup>th</sup> 9:49am

**Mercury Retrograde:** June 15<sup>th</sup> 7:40pm – July 9<sup>th</sup> 10:15pm

## ARIES

May - What more could the Ram ask for but a direct command from the Universe to get out there & play...Yea, you heard me, *you've got your hands in every deal in town* & now it's time to just relax for a spell, give those horns a rest from all that battle...go have yourself some fun, you know it gets the creative juices flowing again

June - Now that you're back to the drawing board...Mars, your ruling planet, has moved into Aries, so you've not only restored your energy but the Universe is dishing out a dose of it's own fairy dust, so simmer down that temper of yours & just allow the stars to do what they do best...and for heavens sake *get out of their way*

## TAURUS

May - The Sun just showed up in your birthday suit & is shining on you Bull, don't just stand there with your ol' stubborn self, *make a move*, do I need to put a red handkerchief in front of your face, listen to your intuition & *do something*...you've stated your intention, now follow your guidance straight to manifestation

June - Alright, you've gone after what you want, now it's time to take a longer look at your feminine side, and *bring your maternal feelings to the surface*, are there any issues that may need your softer side...how are things with your mother, whether she's on this earth plane or watching from above *there's still a little more healing to be done*, so do it

## GEMINI

May - You're on it Twins, your mind & intuition are in sync...with Mercury, your ruling planet of communication in Gemini, you've got *Dr. Jerkily & Mr. Hyde finally agreeing with each other*...you know what your next move is...the Universe is just validating that for you...so what are you waiting for, get on it

June - You did good, now it's time to put on your party pants...it's your birthday & the Sun has just come out to play in *your sign*...pull out all the stops, *push everything aside that's not related to your mission* & dive right in the water is warm, this is the moment you've been waiting for, give it all you got & shine, baby, shine

## CANCER

May - Lady Venus has just shown up at the Crab's humble abode...she's fully dressed & she brought with her

an entire orchestra...you need to follow suit & start singing your song, *you light up your world when you bring music into it*...music & manifestation go hand in hand this month...with a little romance thrown into the mix, *don't be shy*

June - Mercury is in the sign of the Crab this month bringing with it a little retrograde twist...don't let that bother your hard shell...*your intuition is working over-time this month*...start thanking the almighty moon & stars as if your wish is their command, then *wave that magic wand* & take action according, the world is your oyster

## LEO

May - Are you reminiscing back to the old days before you got that shot of courage from the man in Oz...get over it...who says you're not the most intuitive Lion in the jungle ...it's time to regain your crown & *step up to the throne*, you know what you want, it's whispering in your ear...*heed that still small voice, & let them hear you roar*

June - OK lion, you've secured your place back in the jungle, they know who's boss, now it's time to break free, let them run the jungle on their own for awhile, you've got to venture out & *see how the other animals live*, that's right, try something totally different & in a totally different neighborhood...*Lady Venus has a lioness waiting for you to cross the river*

## VIRGO

May - If you sit around & analyze any longer you're going to miss the boat on a world of opportunity...*quit calculating the situation to death*...this is the time to jump right in with both feet & just *do it* for a change...the stars are lined up & they're not going to wait forever...this is the moment you've been waiting for...just *do it!*

June - Now that wasn't so bad was it? Take time out right now to thank the Celestial Heavens for their part in all of this...remember gratitude is the quickest way to the moon & the stars...you can have it all this month...*just keep saying yes & thank you*, & start trusting your heart more than your head...

## LIBRA

May - Spend time this month my dear Libran doing what you love best, just sitting around & *contemplating, meditating & reflecting on what you truly desire*...there is no rush

(at least not at this moment) to make up your mind, you just love hearing that...just sit back, dream, then dream some more about your wishes & goals, then put them into action

June - All that contemplation paid off, it's time to *take your ticket to the window & cash it in...*that's right...you've just hit the Trifecta...now *here's* where your decision making comes back into the picture...*what* are you going to do with it...and *who* are you going to share it with...*the Universe loves spreading the wealth*

## SCORPIO

May - Look's like the Scorpion is on an intuitive roll...what you've been suspecting all along is dead on...you know what to do...give gratitude where gratitude is due...thank the planetary energy for aligning it's great intuitive mind with yours...now set aside all doubts & take action, *you've got to put feet on your prayers*

June - You're on a mission...delegate trivial responsibilities to others...you've got bigger fish to fry...*move full steam ahead on that project of yours...*right now tunnel vision would serve you well, set your sight & aim right for the bulls eye...keep focused, stay on the path & you'll reach your destination before you know it, with a few lessons learned

## SAGITTARIUS

May - You're a born optimist, right now you have the Midas touch, Jupiter, your ruling planet is still blessing you with it's energy...take advantage of this magical moment & *aim that bow & arrow right toward the top...*go for the gold...the only thing holding you back is how big is your

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dream...*if you can dream it you can do it...*show the world what you're made of

June - Looks like there's some leftover residue having to do with your more masculine side, & those male energies of yours, in more ways than one...if there's some unsettled business with the father figures in your life, here in the physical or in the spiritual realm, now's the time to *cast all blame aside & reclaim your power, take responsibility*

## CAPRICORN

May - Someone is reaching out to you, & wants to help you...take some time out Goat to ponder who that may be & take those persevering Goat steps up that mountain path & seek that persons advice...it takes a bigger man/woman to ask for help, just because *you're a workaholic doesn't mean that you have to do it all yourself*

June - This is an order...*take time out to relax*, what is it that brings you more peace & tranquility on the planet than anything else...no, it's not your lap top...push all business aside for now & take some time out to indulge in some much needed self-care...you won't be any good to anyone else if you don't take care of #1...*and that's the goat*

## AQUARIUS

May - Have you been forgetting your morning affirmations...I don't care if you do them in typical Aquarian style while you're burning the bra or marching on capital hill...*just do them...*wake up each morning speaking your positive affirmations out loud...& watch the magnificent gates of manifestation open wide for you...even if it does shout rebel

June - Wow...that really worked didn't it...now you've set your intentions...you know in your heart of hearts what it is you want...now trust that intuitive gut of yours & go after it by golly...act baby act...*a dream without action is still a dream...*there's no stopping you now, listen for that Universal guidance & then follow it...all the way down the road

## PISCES

May - Mars is starting the month still in your sign...so take advantage of this energy early, then *cash in the chips...*it's raining pennies from Heaven...& all that rain is about to fill your lake with an overflow of abundance...keep the blessings flowing & *shower them upon those who inspire you to be the best you can be...*enjoy your fish & chips

June - OK you went a little overboard...it's time to do a little late spring cleaning...that's right...if in doubt, throw it out, start by eliminating clutter from your home, then your office, (or whatever you call your office)...then move right on over to the mind, that's right *clear out those cobwebs...*it's long overdue

*Evstarr's love for Astrology, inherent in her since childhood, is still a growing passion today. NEW relocations charts available, find out where you're best suited for career, romance, health & happiness by visiting her website reachforthemoon.net. More on the subject of Astrology on her new cable TV show Reach for the Moon with Evstarr. Contact her for speaking engagements, lectures, & workshops at evstarr@yahoo.com.*





# THE YOGA PAGES

## For Life - Forgive A Yoga Teacher's Perspective

By Shakthi Paramasivam

What is forgiveness?  
What to forgive?  
When to forgive?  
Why to forgive?  
Who to forgive?

Forgiveness is an act of compassion that frees the person forgiving. We forgive the darkness that causes pain and suffering. We forgive when we have had enough pain, when our spirit cries out "no more!" We forgive when our needs to judge and control are secondary to our needs to love and feel connected.

We need to forgive; it gives us the freedom to live our life without any "clutching energy," the energy that keeps things that we want from coming into our lives. Being non-forgiving and wanting joy is like closing our mouths and trying to eat! I wonder why we are hungry for joy, love and forgiveness.

The ego may keep us back from forgiving, because that's what it does best. It keeps the drama going. It blames others for what we feel; it separates and disconnects. It also

feels that if we forgive we will be bringing on more of the behavior that caused the pain in the first place!

Now to the last question – who to forgive?—You trying to forgive others is just an illusion – there is no other! The only person we can forgive is our self. The other being is just a mirror that reflects, brings up/out the "stuff" that is within us. The other person is like a coach that allows our unwanted energy an avenue from which to flow, be acknowledged, accepted and let go. In fact, we need to learn to be grateful to that person who is showing us our dark side!

Liberation is no longer being attached to the different emotions (apathy, grief, guilt, fear, anger, lust, pride,) that can control us and keep us chained to an existence of misery and suffering that many consider normal! So when the other being triggers one of these emotions within us we have to learn to forgive ourselves that emotion, otherwise it might strangle us. When we don't forgive we are only cutting off our supply to divine energy. Emotions are fine as long as we learn to experience them, let go and move on. It is imperative that we forgive ourselves and our past so that living in this moment becomes a joy. For the joyous sur-

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vival of our planet and all the things that we love, forgive yourself. Let go of your regrets, the things you should have done, the things you should not have said. Relax a little bit, forgive yourself a little more, release a lot and then watch the miracle of life move you through the dance of creation. Intellectually, it's all cool, but can we walk the talk? Will we? If so, when would we? If not, what are we waiting for?

For those of you reading this, not agreeing with the sentiments and feeling an emotion that is not making you feel good – forgive yourself and move on to the next article in the magazine.

Aum Namah Shivaya – Shakthi



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## Forgiveness

By yogagurl

Loving yourself and others requires forgiveness. Forgiveness begins with yourself. When we allow ourselves the freedom to let go of all the pain of a past situation we let go of the burden of holding on and are able to set ourselves free. In the act of forgiveness we encourage others to open their hearts in forgiveness toward us as well.

By forgiving someone, the “forgiver” is liberated. Unfortunately sometimes a forgiving person is looked upon as weak. In fact, it is an extremely powerful and empowering quality to be able to forgive. What can a person do but accept when they are approached by someone who carries the gift of forgiveness in his or her hand?

Forgiving challenges us to live in the moment and to let go of all past resentments and shortcomings.

By holding onto past experiences we harbor deep feelings of anger, resentment or disappointment. These negative emotions not only hinder our health and growth, but our spiritual development as well.

Alexandra Leikermoser  
[www.yogagurl.com](http://www.yogagurl.com)



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# forgiving you, forgiving me

by athena

**M**y late brother, John, was a beacon of light. One of his many gifts was his seemingly natural ability to forgive.

I used to ask him, “Hey John, how come it’s so easy for you to forgive someone for being such a jerk to you?”

John would say, “Because I am selfish. I care about my own happiness and I know that the sooner I forgive that person for whatever s/he did or said, the sooner I can be free [from unnecessary pain] and be happy.”

I understood in theory what John meant, but little did I know that years later, when I lost John to what the police classified as “a freak hiking accident,” I would embark on an unexpected journey of self-healing that challenged me to practice the art of forgiveness —for forgiveness was something that did not come naturally for me.

“They” say that death brings out the best and worst in people. I remember that John’s body was barely cold from the arrival of death when certain individuals in the scientific community were either seeking to fill his position or get his research and data. I also remember those who comforted our family and were there for us.

But one thing I did not remember or realize, despite my efforts to be self-aware, was the pain I was suppressing and holding onto because John was no longer with us in the physical world. It would take me years to realize the latent and unnecessary anger I harbored toward the man who was hiking with John on his last day on earth. A man whom I felt was weak and cowardly for never offering any condolences to our family —not even a condolence card. A man whose intentions I questioned because his story about what happened on the mountain that fatal day was filled with holes, painting him in a posi-

tive light while portraying John in an unflattering way. I was angry with myself for not (in my mind) having the courage to rebuild and live my life, while at the same time trying to compile John’s life work into a volume for his colleagues and friends. I was angry for not getting “out there” John’s last piece that documented how he discovered an alternate method for detecting neutron stars.

In my moment of realization, I remembered John’s words about forgiveness, “*Forgiveness is a means to allow ourselves to be happy.*” Forgiveness doesn’t mean we forget or excuse what someone said or did, or didn’t say or didn’t do. Rather, forgiveness is what releases us from unnecessary pain in order for us to be free to live from a space of light, love and joy.


With this awareness I made a conscious decision to forgive this man and to forgive myself. In the act of forgiving him and forgiving me, I felt the impact of John’s wisdom. I felt a sense of lightness, freedom and peace.

Now, as I learn to practice forgiving others for acting out of integrity, I also apply the same gentleness to myself forgiving myself for being “imperfect” because, ultimately, each and every one of us is doing the best we can; we learn what we learn when we learn it.

So, forgive others and in forgiving others remember to forgive yourself for we all deserve to experience and share the happiness that lies within us.

*Athena, Personal Catalyst, Ph.D., has an extensive work history in counseling, writing, education and broadcasting. Her passion is to empower people to heal their emotional and psychological wounds. Athena is available for workshops and speaking engagements. To learn more about athena see [www.athenainspired.com](http://www.athenainspired.com)*



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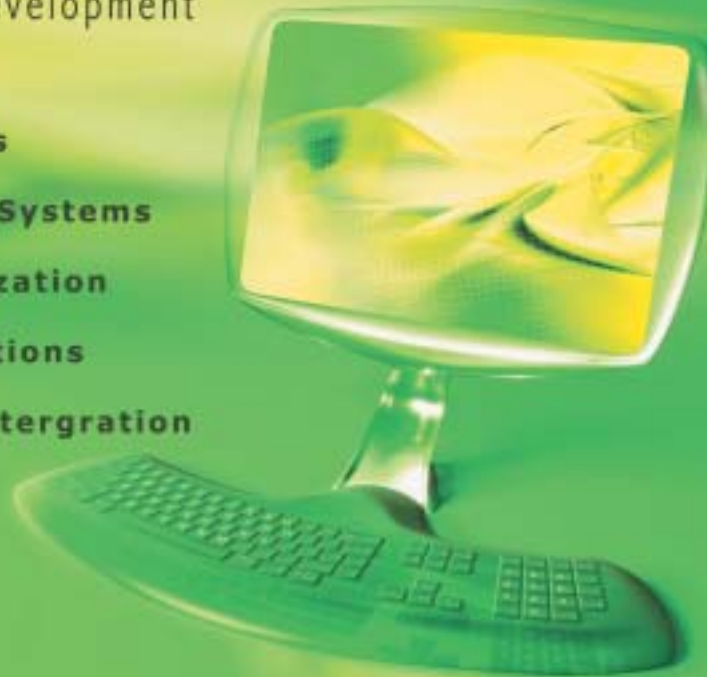
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# FORGIVENESS

By David Alexander

There is a line from *A Course in Miracles* that reads, “Forgiveness offers everything I want.” Everything? Yes, that’s what it says, and that’s what it means.

Consider the ramifications of living a life of unforgiveness. You spend much of your time in anger, perhaps hate, toward another person. Perhaps that anger is turned inward and you spend your life in guilt and shame for something you did in the long-distant past.

We all live in a Universe of free will, and that free will can work toward your wondrous advantage or toward your detriment. The good news is that it is entirely your choice what path to choose. If you are carrying unforgiving thoughts, the best choice is always to let them go.

When I was growing up my mother and father loved me. I had no doubt of that. My mother, however, was an embarrassment to me because of her volatile anger. It would erupt seemingly out of nowhere in front of anyone who happened to be near. When it did I would grit my teeth. Each time she exploded my resentment toward her increased. By the time I was a young adult, I avoided being around my mother in any social situation. I had a lot of forgiving to do.

In my 30s I began the forgiveness process. I had launched my spiritual path. I soon realized that to be free and happy I needed to forgive my mother. Each time I felt resentment toward her I focused on love. I wrote lists of all the times I could remember when she had embarrassed me with her anger. I forgave each item on the list until it no longer held any negative energy for me. This took many, many repetitions.

The entire process took years to complete. It was worth it. By the time my mother was elderly and in a nursing home I no longer reacted at all to her anger. I was able to love her unconditionally for the rest of her life.

After I finished the forgiveness process with my mother I turned within and looked at all the areas in which I felt I needed to forgive myself. This self-forgiveness is ongoing. I dealt with all of what I considered the major mis-

takes in my life. Since then, I am able to recognize an unforgiving thought and forgive it on the spot. In my opinion, this process will never be complete. I am able now to live joyfully, unencumbered by unforgiving thoughts that “stick” to me.

If you have angry, negative feelings it is worth it to deal with them now. Many of them probably had their source in your childhood and have been repeated in various forms since you reached adulthood.

As I did, you can heal yourself. Here is a three-step process to forgiveness:

1. Become aware of your thoughts. There are no such things as “idle” thoughts. They all affect the quality of our life, whether they are happy thoughts or negative thoughts. It behooves all of us to monitor our thought process moment by moment. Then we begin to develop the awareness to change them when necessary and to forgive what needs to be forgiven.

2. Write lists of whatever needs to be forgiven from your past. This includes any person or event that elicits anger or negativity in you. Be as specific as you can when you write your lists so that you become aware of exactly what you are forgiving.

3. Take one item at a time from your list and work with it daily. Create forgiveness phrases such as, “I forgive John for stealing money from me.” Work with this each day until the fact that John stole from you absolutely makes no difference to you any more. When you know you are clear with one item, move on to the next until you complete your list.

Getting through our initial list of things to be forgiven can take years. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed or exhausted by the process, take a week or two off. But always return to it. It is definitely worth it for the quality of your life.

Remember: “Forgiveness offers everything I want.”

*David Alexander is project manager and program director at Unity of Greater Cleveland in Shaker Heights where his wife, Rev. Joan Gattuso, is the minister. He is also the editor of Unity Magazine.*



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# Free to Forgive

By Mary Ann Reiger

**A**s a young girl I liked to play with building blocks. I advanced from wood blocks to metal erector sets. The many dolls given to me did little to change my desire to build. Perhaps this came from my father. I watched him bring home numerous cinder blocks and giant concrete blocks from his job as a cement truck driver. He would use these blocks for anything imaginable.

Proudly, with a plump beet face and large bulging arm muscles, he would carry his “finds” to our back yard, much to the dismay of my mother. I remember trying to build my own backyard hideaway with cinder blocks until I discovered spiders were already residents. I switched to the bigger concrete blocks. It was a tedious process and I still don’t know how I lifted them. My parents did not mind me spending time in my hideaway. They knew where I was because there was no door.

For reasons that I could not understand, I needed a hideaway. At times I would leave the blocks behind to explore the woods. My mother thought I got “lost” intentionally because I would sit for hours watching birds build their nests. It fascinated me to see birds building new nests every year. This seemed foolish to me as a child, but wise to me now.

Over time, a different hideaway of concrete blocks became my prison. My childhood hideaway had been taken apart for “better purposes.” My childhood pains became my new solid concrete blocks, a secure hideaway. I aptly named each block: abused, deprived, rejected. The largest block was named “Self-blame.” With passing years I added more blocks naming them after new hurtful experiences. These blocks reinforced the original ones. My hideaway soon had many escape rooms. I learned how to control the light, lifting one block long enough to see with clarity than slamming it back down whenever I became afraid.

But, I still had the door issue. Occasionally a compas-

sionate soul would walk in encouraging me to leave the blocks behind; I steadfastly refused. My blocks were justifiable, for facts supported their existence. I had been harmed, suffered from abuse of power, my trust violated. Experiences that built the heavier blocks were the untimely deaths of loved ones. I had a right to be angry and fearful. My prison grew and my resentments became confusing shackles. Eventually, I added blocks of egotism, accomplishment and money. These decorative blocks proclaimed to all that I was doing fine.

But the light persisted in shining through my blocks, more so after I became a reiki master. The light shone directly into my higher consciousness. My spiritual practice would turn a glaring lamp back onto me. Block after block crumbled in this light. When I channeled, I would talk of forgiveness, heart chakra energy and expansion of positive thoughts. I worked to forgive with regularity and blocks disappeared into thin air. Apparently, they were not heavy blocks at all. It was I who had decided they were.

After awhile, it seemed only several pieces from my original blocks remained. One day I walked away from them and into the light. The doorway had always been open. I didn’t walk alone. I walked away with the help of spirit and my intent to live fearlessly and joyfully. I asked for spirit to guide me to release these remnants from me because I could not. I realized how much my blocks had prevented me from living my life fully.

Recently, I became an ordained interfaith minister. Spirit tested me because a short time afterward I endured a hurt from someone who meant much to me. I chose not to justify my pain, reside in anger, seek retribution or dwell in resentment. I chose to forgive. That unbearable hurt became my blessing. By choosing to forgive I chose to be free.

There was one block that I had avoided. It was the heaviest block of all, “Self-blame.” I again asked spirit to help. As I walked out farther into the light I could see the world again with child-like eyes watching birds build nests. Instead of disappearing, the block transformed into a beautiful bird that whistled a joyful tune of my deservedness to give and receive love.

Inevitably, there will again be hurts that will need to be forgiven and I will ask for forgiveness for any pain I inflict. As my life changes, I can rebuild nests in trust, not fear. With spirit as my guide and forgiveness as the doorway to a better world I will never again build a hideaway. *Forgiveness brings freedom.*



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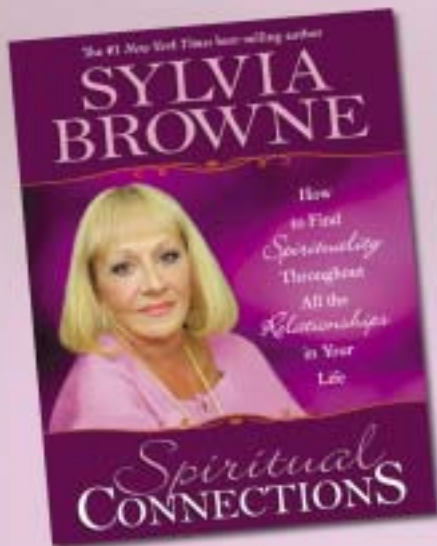
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# FORGIVENESS AND KARMA

By Jenny Smedley

**W**ho should we forgive? What is the most important place to start for Karmic purity? People would probably suggest those who have wronged us in past lives; but, this is not necessary. Anger toward those we have shared past lives with is naturally filtered out during the time we spend in between lives. Our *Past Life Angels* take us through this process so that we can move on.

The place to start forgiving is within ourselves. Guilt is the most destructive of all emotions. It leaves us crippled with doubt and fears and often makes us incapable of enjoying relationships with past life soul clan members, or anyone at all. This guilt makes us feel undeserving of love or happiness. It can cause all nature of self-destructive behavior patterns. We can sabotage ourselves.

The most common manifestation of this is when we constantly destroy approaching happiness. One way this happens is by the person becoming a severe hypochondriac, constantly imagining deathly illnesses at first sign of a joyful event. Or, they might become a compulsive obsessive, not realizing that the rituals they feel obliged to employ to keep everyone and everything safe are just ways to assuage their underlying guilt. We do this subconsciously, but deliberately nevertheless.

This guilt is misplaced because anything we did, any crime we committed in a past life is not our responsibility. We are not that soul – we merely *evolved* from it. To take the blame for its actions would be like a bird taking

the blame for something a dinosaur did.

We do need to learn from our mistakes and experiences, but to carry the blame for them through the next life is unnecessary and blocks our progress in the worst possible way. My own example of this was that I blamed myself for the murder of my husband in a life in the 1600s. I thought that it was dangerous to love me because in that life had he not loved me, he would not have died.

In this life it resulted in my not being able to enjoy the first several years of my marriage (to another soul mate) because I was constantly afraid he would be taken from me, and always terribly jealous and insecure because I thought I did not deserve to be loved. I constantly doubted love. Any other partner might have left because of the intensity of this doubt.

Luckily for me, once I was regressed to fully understand my part in past events, and my naivety in that life, I was able to see where my guilt came from and understand how I was sabotaging myself because of it. I was able to see that I could forgive. Though I was indeed partly to blame for the incident, it was a part of me that no longer existed. I had evolved; forgiveness was possible. This enabled me to stop the self-destructive behavior immediately.

*Jenny Smedley is the author of three books – Past Life Angels, Souls Don't Lie and The Tree That Talked. All available at Amazon.com. She is a past life advisor, does remote aura readings and unique angel portraits. Find out more at: [www.jennysmedley.com](http://www.jennysmedley.com).*



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*Immaculee's Story... Continued from page 5*

Immaculee reached safety at the pastor's home, but soon after her brothers Damascene and Vianney arrived with the frightening news that their home had been ransacked and torched by soldiers. They didn't know where their parents were and the boys had passed scores of dead bodies on the road. Soon after, Damascene left and the pastor eventually ordered Vianney and a friend to leave.

Five other Tutsi women made it to the pastor's house, followed soon after by a mob, shrieking loudly, "Kill them. Kill them all!" The women hid in a crawl space and avoided capture. But the mobs were entering homes in search of Tutsis, so the pastor led the six women to his bedroom and into a tiny bathroom four-feet long and three feet wide, large enough only for a small shower stall and toilet.

The pastor warned the women, from 7 to 55-years-old, to be totally silent. They could flush the toilet only when they heard someone in a bathroom on the other side of the wall flush. "If you make any noise, you will die," the pastor warned.

To sit, the four tallest pushed their backs against the wall, slid to the floor and pulled the two smallest down on top of them. Elbows jammed into ribs, literally. They were forced to take turns standing to stretch, two to three minutes at a time. After a month, the pastor brought in two more women, making tiny quarters even tighter.

Immaculee began praying, but wrestled with her anger at the pastor for turning out her brother and the Hutus for their savagery. On the third day, a mob numbering in the hundreds surrounded the house, chanting, "Kill them, kill them, kill them all; kill them big and kill them small." The mob entered the pastor's home and Immaculee prayed intensely for salvation. The thoroughly frightened women remained undiscovered.

And so it went, for three months, sometimes with frenzied Hutus searching just on the other side of the bathroom wall. During one fevered prayer after the pastor said he had heard a new, more thorough search of his house was imminent, Immaculee had a flash of insight "to make the killers blind." She pleaded with the pastor to move a large wardrobe in front of the bathroom door. That inspiration, which Immaculee believes was sent by God, saved their lives. Though the house was searched, no one discovered the tiny bathroom.

Over time the anxiety the women experienced increased, and Immaculee found herself in constant silent prayer, in part because her faith wavered and nearly collapsed. At one point she was so angry, she wished to kill everyone.

"If I had an atomic bomb, I would have dropped it on Rwanda and killed everyone in our stupid, hateful land," Immaculee thought. But Immaculee eventually opened her heart and began to believe that although these people had turned a blind eye toward evil, they were still children of God. She knew she could not ask for God's love if she were unwilling to forgive these people whose souls belonged to God, despite their evil ways.

"I took a crucial step toward forgiving the killers that day," Immaculee later wrote. "For the first time since I entered the bathroom, I slept in peace."

Somehow, the women survived unscathed, though they suffered through sickness, urinary-tract infections and near starvation. The 115 pound Immaculee lost more than 40 pounds during her ordeal.

Finally, after 91 days of torment, the pastor took them out in the middle of the night and escorted them to French soldiers. Danger still lurked during several moves because Hutus roamed the countryside. Once they successfully faced a band of Hutus alone until they made it safely to rebel Tutsi soldiers.

In the aftermath of those terrible experiences, Immaculee says she learned in that bathroom the difference between being spared and being saved. She may have summed it up best in her book when she pointed out that "in the midst of the genocide, I'd found my salvation.

"I knew that my bond with God would transcend the bathroom, the war and the holocaust . . . it was a bond I now knew would transcend life itself."

It's that bond she is so fond of sharing with audiences.

"I just wish people can know that you are never alone," Immaculee says. "Everything can come back. Everything is possible. There is hope."

Despite the fine, shining example Immaculee Ilibagiza has set, she brushes aside suggestions that she should be set up as a role model.

"It is the calling of everyone to be a role model to a child or a friend," Immaculee says. "It is good if God can give me the gift to inspire other people, but that is a calling for every human being. I don't think I'm special."

Her parents did.


In Rwanda, parents give their children a unique surname when they are born to reflect how they feel at that moment. Immaculee was christened "Ilibagiza," which means "shining and beautiful in body and soul."

Clearly it was a name well chosen and one in which, even today, many find perfectly fitting for this remarkable woman.

Immaculee has established the Left to Tell Charitable Fund designed to provide aid to Rwandan orphans and other African children. For more information go to [www.lefttotell.com](http://www.lefttotell.com).

*Immaculee Ilibagiza will be a presenter at the "Celebrate Your Life" conference in Chicago on June 22- 24. For more information please go to [www.celebrateyourlife.org](http://www.celebrateyourlife.org) or call 1-877-300-7352.*

*To inquire about booking Immaculee please call Maya Labos at 954-561-0701*

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### **Precision and Grace** Deepening Your Yoga Practice Saturday, September 8 The Journey EXPO - 3 PM

At every level of yoga practice there is an opportunity to go deeper. In this workshop we will explore various ways in which to achieve this. By balancing "precision with grace" we celebrate yoga's gift of wholeness and completeness; a blend of mind, body and spirit. This will be a Vinyasa style class based mainly on the Ashtanga Yoga system of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois.

### **Yoga Lounge with Swaha**

**Asana and Chanting! • Saturday, September 8 • The Journey EXPO - 6:30 PM**

Yoga Lounge is a Vinyasa style class, flowing with earthy trancey rhythms and healing chants to lift, balance and restore your energy. This class flows with the groove of Swaha's pre-recorded richly textured yoga lounge music, entitled "Vishnu's Dream". Yoga lounge is a dynamic class that is grounding, energizing, transcendental and transformational!!!

SWAHA performs music that is both inspired and uplifting. It is an enticing blend of ethereal Sanskrit vocals soaring over rich earthy rhythms. The songs are composed by Meenakshi and Ron Reid. Following the Yoga Lounge - Swaha will be leading a Kirtan (call and response chanting) beginning at 8PM.

- Ashtanga Workshop - \$50 (\$45 before March 15) • Yoga Lounge - \$25 (\$20 with Ashtanga Workshop)
- Kirtan - \$5 • Please Register Early -Classes are Limited!!!

**Swaha Workshops will be held on Saturday at the 2007 Journey Mind, Body & Soul EXPO  
September 7-9 at Lakeland Community College • Kirtland, Ohio**

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Please join us in welcoming Angel Medium Laura Lee. Laura will be in town for the May 11 Journey Psychic Fair and will be giving a special lecture at Karma Yoga on Saturday May 12. This will include audience readings. Laura has shared the stage with such authors as Dr. Wayne Dyer, Doreen Virtue, James Van Praagh and many others. She has been featured on numerous television and radio programs. Cost is \$25. Please RSVP

Laura Lee will also be a headline speaker at the Journey EXPO September 7-9.



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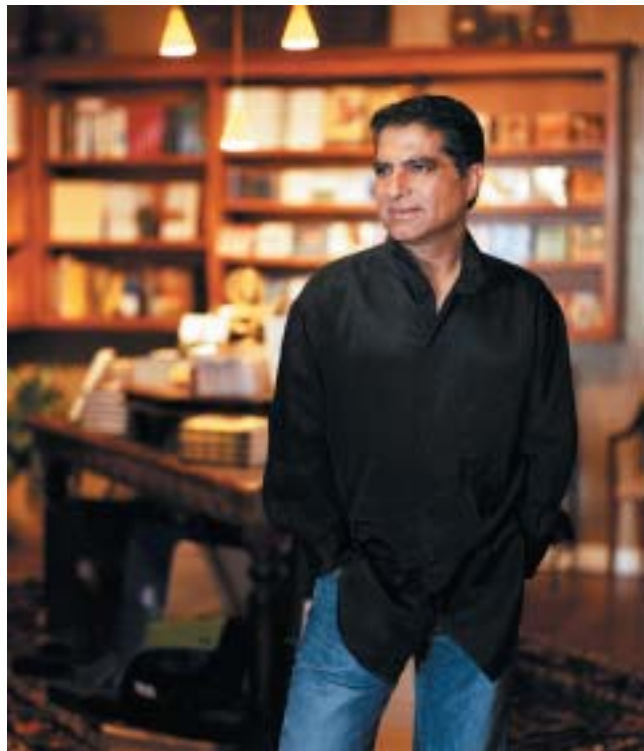
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**The 2007 EXPO will be held September 7-9 at**  
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