

Forgiveness

(adapted from Conquering Chemical Dependency)

“The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.” Proverbs 14:1 powerfully applies to the issue of forgiving. When we refuse to forgive, we harm ourselves. We tear down the house in which we must live.

Up to this point we have used chemicals as part of our strategy to repress or deny strong emotions like fear and anger, and to prevent them from causing pain in our lives. Unfortunately, it didn't always work. We still got hurt. We hid our true feelings. For years we nursed grudges, hatred, and jealousy. Bottled-up emotions grew. Those strong emotions supported our addiction. The process of recovery requires that we deal with hidden or denied feelings. Forgiveness means that we choose to give up our self-proclaimed “right” to blame, condemn, find fault, punish, and retaliate against others.

Things we often substitute for forgiveness:

- Forgetting an offense or pretending it did not happen.
- Trying to bury the pain or avoid the issue by drinking or drugging the rage away.
- Punishing your offender by passive-aggressive forms of revenge, like procrastination, the “silent” treatment, or getting drunk or high.
- Assuming responsibility for others' offenses—being a “blame sponge”.
- Taking revenge.