

GUILT (or REGRET)

Applies only if you have done something wrong or immoral. Seldom the case - most often REGRET that you wish things could have gone differently. Need to ask ourselves if our guilt is realistic, is it appropriate? Ask for objective feedback from someone you trust Common with car accidents/Esp. for parents with role as protectors Why guilt?

1. Self-blame is a way to restore sense of control and fight the randomness/senselessness - easier to find yourself guilty than to face the helplessness
2. Need to explain death through blame
3. Family of origin - "everything is my fault"
4. Western culture is litigious Regret is a part of all relationships, esp. in death.

No opportunity to make things right or finish business in unexpected death. Coping with Guilt and Regret:

1. Distinguish one from the other, process with someone you trust
2. Practice compassion towards yourself and work to forgive self eventually
3. Write about it and give yourself time to process it

Forgiveness

Humans are not perfect and we all make mistakes. How can we make it right and move on? Humans are such social beings. All of our many different relationships are so important that if something goes wrong (a misunderstanding, a mistake, a breach of some kind), there must be a way to repair or restore the relationship. As we move on the path toward wholeness in our recovery; toward living into our best possible selves, we encounter the need to forgive (others and ourselves). We are only humans, after all. We have limits. There is, thankfully, a way to make it right again. To restore our relationships with one another; to bring ourselves into integrity...that way or path is forgiveness. Forgiveness is typically defined (by the folks at Wikipedia) as the process of concluding resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offense, difference or mistake, and/or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. Many factors need to be considered when we begin to think about forgiving others or ourselves.

- Forgiveness is more of a process or intention than it is an end goal. It is rarely a one-time thing. If we think forgiveness is an end goal and we still feel hurt or anger or guilt, it will seem impossible. Therefore, we need to understand forgiveness as a process, something we work on day by day, an intention that becomes our aim.

Adapted from Swedish Hospital Traumatic Loss/Bereavement

- Forgiveness can begin when we are ready and not a minute before. If we're still having strong emotions like anger or fear, it isn't yet time. After we move through the grief, the anger, the resentment, the fear (whatever the emotion)...then it's time. There are many ways to process strong emotions; prayer, meditation, physical activities (some examples could be...beating tennis balls, running or walking, vigorous housecleaning, working out with weights), and if you get stuck: therapy.
- Forgiveness is something we do for ourselves; not forgiving (or nurturing a resentment) hurts us. Knowing and feeling our feelings is essential for a healthy and whole life. We can't selectively numb feelings; when we numb the pain, we numb the joy as well. Learning to move through the pain (instead of sitting in it or avoiding it) will be an important part of this process.
- Forgiving ourselves can be one of the most difficult, yet most important parts of our own recovery. If we can't be compassionate to ourselves, it's very difficult to offer compassion to others. • Forgiveness doesn't mean we forget or allow someone to keep hurting us. It is NOT excusing or condoning. It is possible to both forgive and remember everything that happened to us and to set a boundary to protect ourselves from further harm. Sometimes that means we can't be around that person who doesn't listen or change their behavior and who keeps hurting us.
- Forgiveness is evidence of strength, not weakness. Forgiveness work takes courage and a willingness to engage in difficult self-reflection and to process painful emotions.
- Forgiveness is a central value in many faith traditions.
- Forgiveness is easier when you practice on small hurts and slights, working your way toward the more challenging offenses. Creating a forgiving attitude or intention is important. We have to build up our forgiving 'muscles' by practicing on the easier situations and gaining strength and resilience.
- An important part of forgiveness is letting it go. You get to decide the timing and exactly what you are letting go. The thing you let go of might be caring about the other people telling you to let it go. It helps to make a conscious choice to stop beating yourself up about it. When it comes up in your mind you can choose deep compassion for yourself. You deserve it.
- Forgiveness for Suicide Survivors sometimes means we eventually acknowledge that maybe there wasn't anything more you could have done. Acknowledge that there might have been many things you did to keep the person you lost alive. Forgive yourself for not being able to save them. You couldn't save them, but you can save yourself