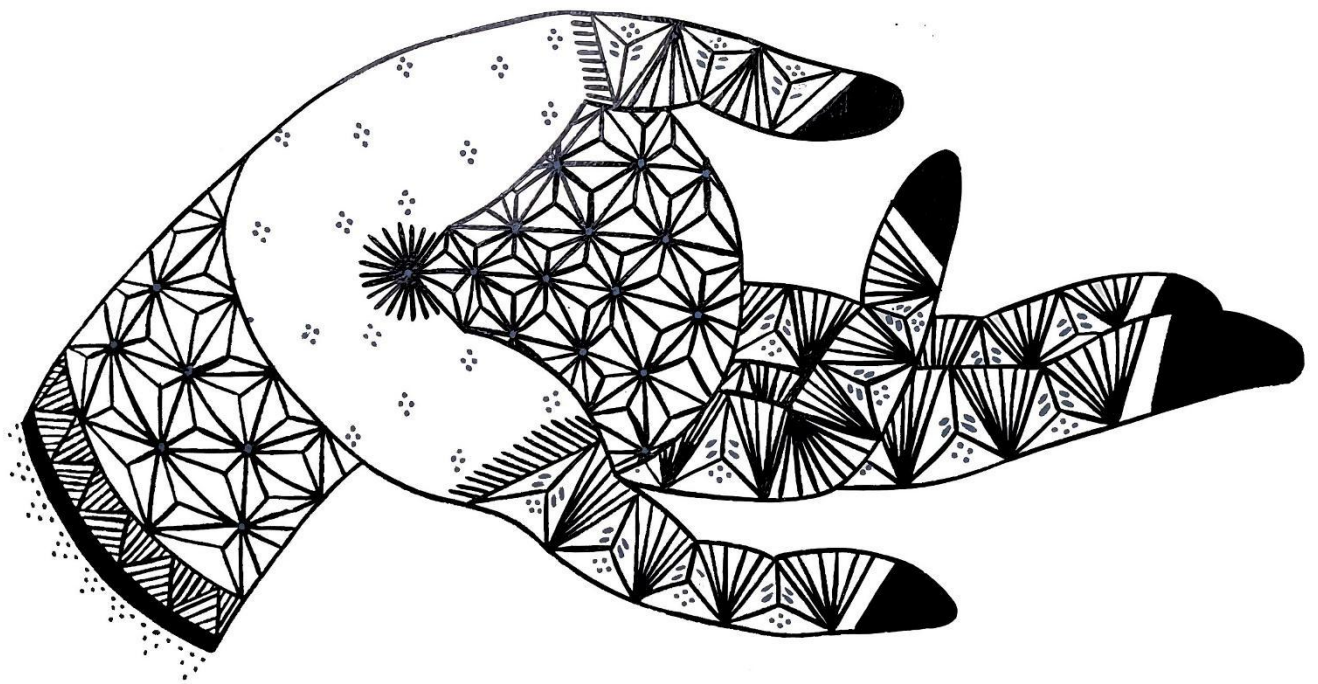


Fifth Precept Sangha / Hungry Ghost Retreats

# The Heart of Forgiveness Workbook

A Work in Progress



Vince Cullen  
Nov 2022



## For clarity and the avoidance of doubt:

### *What's the difference between the Fifth Precept fellowship and Hungry Ghost retreats?*

**Fifth Precept Sangha (Fellowship):** is a peer-led mutual-help organisation that uses Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices to help people wake up to this life. For some, this manifests as a wholehearted recovery from the suffering caused by addictive behaviours. This approach encourages individual [commitment](https://www.5th-precept.org) to living life in harmony – as best we can - with the [Five Universal Precepts](https://www.5th-precept.org) which includes total-abstinence. – [www.5th-precept.org](https://www.5th-precept.org)

**Hungry Ghost Retreats:** are an opportunity to explore and cultivate some of the principles and practices of the Fifth Precept Sangha's approach to waking up to this life (i.e. recovering from life's difficulties) and embracing the possibilities and potentiality of a life without alcohol, drugs and other compulsions; making the dreams you didn't know you had, come true - all within a retreat setting – [www.HungryGhostRetreats.org](https://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org)

*[‘The Forgiveness Workbook’](#) is a work in progress by Vince Cullen.*

*The **Forgiveness Workbook** is intended primarily as a resource for the Fifth Precept Sangha (see [www.5th-Precept.org](https://www.5th-Precept.org)) and secondly as a hand-out at ‘Hungry Ghost’ workshop-retreats (see [www.HungryGhostRetreats.org](https://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org)).*

*The latest version of **The Forgiveness Workbook** can be freely downloaded from:  
[www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/](https://www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/)*

*The version that you are now reading is dated November 2022 (v8)*

*Should you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to  
[vince.cullen@tara-detox.org](mailto:vince.cullen@tara-detox.org)*



*"Look how he abused me and beat me,  
How he threw me down and robbed me."*

*Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.*

*"Look how he abused me and beat me,  
How he threw me down and robbed me."*

*Abandon such thoughts, and live in love.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Dhammapada verses 3 & 4 translated by Thomas Byron

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## Introduction

This workbook was originally intended for use on a ‘Hungry Ghost Retreat’ workshop as an introduction and guide to the cultivation, or the bhāvana<sup>2</sup>, of Forgiveness. However, it has been suggested that these exercises might also be expanded to form the basis of a Buddhist ‘Moral Inventory’ in a similar way as is used within 12-Step traditions.

## A Template for Forgiveness

The meditation templates ([Part One](#), [Part Two](#), and [Part Three](#)) have been greatly influenced by teachers such as Gil Fronsdal, Jack Kornfield, Ajahn Thanasanti and Christina Feldman... and particularly the teacher and author Jeff Oliver for his book ‘Forgiveness for Everyone’<sup>3</sup>.

### How to prepare for Forgiveness Bhāvana:

This is a practice that views the process - or the cultivation - of forgiveness ~ Forgiveness Bhāvana ~ through the lens of the Five Universal Precepts. That is, to see the harm caused by not living in harmony with these ethical aspirations...

- Refraining from harming ourselves or others by [our thoughts, our words or] our actions.
- Refraining from taking anything that has not been freely given.
- Refraining from sexual [and sensual] misconduct.
- Refraining from false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander.
- Refraining from taking alcohol and other drugs that lead to the loss of mindfulness<sup>4</sup>.

These are five seemingly simple guidelines intended to reduce and remove so much avoidable suffering from our own lives and from the lives of those around us. I think of these five suggestions as being the oldest Harm Reduction and Relapse Prevention programme known to mankind! To live mindfully (*remembering-to-remember*) in harmony with these five suggestions or these five great gifts as they are sometimes known, is to commit to harmlessness in the service of blamelessness and the natural rewards of freedom from fear, freedom from hostility and freedom from affliction.

When this workbook is being used as part of a **Hungry Ghost Retreat** workshop, I suggest writing one or two examples of past hurts\* in each category that you would like to bring into this practice.

Work through the precept pages – one page for each precept – noting for each precept how we have hurt others, how we have hurt ourselves, and how we have been hurt by others.

**\*IMPORTANT WARNING:** These should be minor hurts, small offences and violations, to be used as much to practice the practice, as to heal those specific hurts. Try not to start with major hurts from the past, you can build up to those as you cultivate the practice.

As I’ve said this is a meditation template and this practice should be broken down and undertaken over a period of sessions or ‘sittings’ that may last weeks or months or even years.

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<sup>2</sup> Bhāvanā (Pali; Sanskrit, also bhāvana) literally means "development" or "cultivating" or "producing" in the sense of "calling into existence." It is an important concept in Buddhist praxis (Patipatti). The word bhavana normally appears in conjunction with another word forming a compound phrase such as citta-bhavana (the development or cultivation of the heart/mind) or metta-bhavana (the development/cultivation of lovingkindness). When used on its own bhavana signifies 'spiritual cultivation' generally – [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhavana](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhavana)

<sup>3</sup> ‘Forgiveness for Everyone’ by Jeff Oliver (<http://sjba.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/FORGIVENESS-FOR-EVERYONE.pdf>)

<sup>4</sup> Mindfulness (or Sati) in Buddhist tradition is always ethically inclined and always in the service of reducing suffering.

## Finding Peace with Forgiveness

*"These two are fools. Which two?  
The one who doesn't see his/her transgression as a transgression, and the one who doesn't rightfully pardon another who has confessed his/her transgression.  
These two are fools.*

*"These two are wise. Which two?  
The one who sees his/her transgression as a transgression, and the one who rightfully pardons another who has confessed his/her transgression.  
These two are wise." <sup>5</sup>*

In **waking up to this life** we can be immobilised by our sense of guilt and shame about events that have happened in the past. Further, we can be immobilised by holding on to anger, hatred, ill-will and resentments.

We can close this potential door to yet more suffering through the cultivation of **Forgiveness**.

It can be very positive and beneficial to cultivate **Forgiveness**, particularly in the early stages of 'waking up' or 'recovery'. We can learn to ask for forgiveness, to forgive ourselves and we can also set the intention to forgive others. We can bring forward memories of things that have happened in the past in a way that is skilful, without re-traumatising ourselves.

It is important to be aware of the difference between **Guilt** and **Remorse**. <sup>6</sup>

Guilt is 'unskilful' in Buddhist terms, as it has the tendency to solidify into *"I'm a bad person"* and even *"I'll always be a bad person"*.

Remorse, on the other hand, is a skilful expression of personal regret for a thought, word or act which we feel has caused ourselves or someone else suffering and hurt. Remorse views things in terms of cause and effect (*Karma-Vipaka*) :

***"When these causes and conditions arise AND when these choices are taken, then these results will follow. There may be suffering for me and others."***

This mindfulness-based remorse does not solidify into negative self-views but acknowledges that we can and we do change:

***"That was who I was,  
not who I am;  
and not who I will be!  
I am changing... I forgive myself!"<sup>7</sup>***

<sup>5</sup> "Fools & Wise People" (AN 2.21) translated from the Pali by: Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

<sup>6</sup> Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - *"Four Foundations of Mindfulness"* (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - <http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/>

<sup>7</sup> 'Forgiveness for Everyone' (p.105) by Jeff Oliver

## What does the act of Forgiveness mean?

We can use this healing practice to examine the ways in which we have harmed ourselves and other people; and how we have been hurt by others, then we can let it all go.

To paraphrase Jack Kornfield:-

- We have all been harmed or betrayed; just as at other times we have harmed or betrayed ourselves or others. In undertaking this practice, we set forth the intention to **forgive**, to ask for **forgiveness** and to ask-extend **forgiveness** to ourselves.
- **Forgiveness** does not justify or condone harmful actions. While we may **forgive**, we do not have to forget; we may say *“never again will I allow this to happen!”*
- **Forgiveness** does not mean that we have to seek out and speak to those who have caused us harm.
- Sometimes **forgiveness** does come naturally from this practice; sometimes it can have quite the opposite effect; uncovering all of the pain, anger and resentment that we still carry. In this instance, we offer Boundless-friendliness for ourselves.
- **Forgiveness** is an act of the heart. We let go of the burdens of the resentment, ill-will and outrage that we have carried for too long.
- The process of **forgiveness** cannot be faked or rushed. In some situations and circumstances, full **forgiveness** may take many years. This is OK! But in the end, **forgiveness** will come as a relief; as a release of the heart.
- We enter gently into the practice of **forgiveness**. This is a practice that can be done a hundred times. Gradually, little-by-little, it will liberate us from the past; and open our hearts to the present, letting us move on with our lives.<sup>8</sup>
- Fundamentally, **forgiveness** is for our own sake; a way to no longer carry the pain of the past. Forgiveness is essential for ‘wholehearted recovery’.

## The Generosity of Forgiveness

*We should forgive one another and wash away that stain from our hearts.  
Why?  
Because otherwise, it turns into animosity and enmity.  
The act of forgiving is called the gift of forgiveness.<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth  
<http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/>

<sup>9</sup> Ajahn Lee Dhammadhara - [www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html)



## Forgiveness and Long Life

There are many benefits of forgiveness that might include living with a peaceful mind, and even dying with a peaceful mind.

In certain circumstances, one study suggests that when experiencing life-threatening health conditions those individuals who are unable or unwilling to forgive have a far greater chance of not surviving their illness.

**Unforgiveness** makes people sick and keeps them sick.

Another study found that, of all cancer patients, 61 per cent had forgiveness issues, and of those, more than half were severe.<sup>10</sup>

### *A Prayer of Forgiveness*

*"If I have harmed anyone in any way  
either knowingly or unknowingly  
through my own confusions  
I ask their forgiveness.*

*If anyone has harmed me in any way  
either knowingly or unknowingly  
through their own confusions  
I forgive them.*

*And if there is a situation  
I am not yet ready to forgive  
I forgive myself for that.*

*For all the ways that I harm myself,  
negate, doubt, belittle myself,  
judge or be unkind to myself  
through my own confusions  
I forgive myself."*

It is through the spirit and practice of forgiveness that we can be freed from the past to live more fully in the present; we can radically change our lives for the better, here and now.

*Hatred never ends through hatred,  
By non-hate alone does it end.  
This is an ancient truth.<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/healthscience/2015/June/The-Deadly-Consequences-of-Unforgiveness>

<sup>11</sup> Dhammapada verse 5 translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita

## The Five Great Gifts: Older than the Buddha

*"Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans." <sup>12</sup>*

The Buddha spoke these words in a talk called the **Rewards Sutta** more than 2,500 years ago, clearly making the point that these suggestions for a peaceful life were already original and long-standing etc. So these precepts shouldn't be considered 'Buddhist' but more correctly, they should be recognised as universal, and as the Buddha says not open to suspicion and irrefutable by intelligent people.

### The First Gift : "I will train myself not to cause harm by my thoughts, my words or my actions."

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

*"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, **abandoning the taking of life**, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression". <sup>13</sup>*

In a different talk called the **Dhammika Sutta** , the Buddha advises a lay-follower named Dhammika of the ascetic practices undertaken by sensible people:

*"Now I will tell you the layman's duty. Following it a lay-disciple would be virtuous... He should not kill a living being, nor cause it to be killed, nor should he incite another to kill. Do not injure any being, either strong or weak, in the world." <sup>14</sup>*

An alternative translation -

*"Kill not any beings nor cause them to be killed, and do not approve of them having been killed, put by the rod for all that lives— whether they are weak, or strong in the world."*

### Modern Perspectives on Ancient Principles

The Vietnamese monk **Thich Nhat Hanh** offers present-day practitioners an embracing an alternative viewpoint on the Five Universal Precepts which he calls **The Five Mindfulness Trainings** and describes as representing a Buddhist vision for global spirituality and ethics.

#### Reverence For Life

*"Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world." <sup>15</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.039.than.html>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

<sup>14</sup> "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html>

<sup>15</sup> The Five Mindfulness trainings - <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

## The First Gift : Worksheet

*"I will train myself not to harm myself or others by my thoughts, by my words or by my actions."*

**Write one or two examples for each category of physical hurt :**

*The ways that I have hurt others physically or emotionally through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have hurt myself physically or emotionally through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have been hurt physically or emotionally by Other's thoughts, their words or their actions...*

## The Second Gift : “I will train myself not to take anything that has not been freely given to me (or withholding that which I should have given to others).”

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

*"Furthermore, **abandoning taking what is not given (stealing)**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second gift, the second great gift — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmins".*<sup>16</sup>

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

*"A disciple should avoid taking anything from anywhere knowing it (to belong to another). He should not steal nor incite another to steal. He should completely avoid theft."*<sup>17</sup>

An alternative translation<sup>18</sup>

*"What is "ungiven" — anything, anywhere, that's known to be others', its theft one should avoid. Neither order things taken, nor others' removal approve— all of this "ungiven" let the hearer avoid."*

## True Happiness

**Thich Nhat Hanh** continues:

*Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and stop contributing to climate change."*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

<sup>17</sup> "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html>

<sup>18</sup> "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearers' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills <https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills>

<sup>19</sup> The Five Mindfulness trainings - <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

## The Second Gift : Worksheet

*"I will train myself not to take anything that has not been freely given to me (or withholding that which I should have given to others)."*

**Write one or two examples for each category of harm :**

*The ways that I have harmed others by stealing or withholding through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have harmed myself by stealing or withholding through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have been harmed by Other's stealing or withholding what was rightfully mine...*

## The Third Gift : “I will train myself not to cause suffering through sexual misconduct”

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

*"Furthermore, **abandoning illicit sex**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third gift, the third great gift— original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmins".<sup>20</sup>*

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

*"A wise man should avoid unchastity as (he would avoid falling into) a pit of glowing charcoal. If unable to lead a celibate life, he should not go to another's wife."<sup>21</sup>*

An alternative translation<sup>22</sup>

*"Let the intelligent person live a celibate life,  
as one would avoid a pit of glowing coals;  
but being unable to live the celibate life,  
go not beyond the bounds with others' partners."*

## True Love

**Thich Nhat Hanh** continues:

*Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future."<sup>23</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

<sup>21</sup> "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html>

<sup>22</sup> "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills <https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills>

<sup>23</sup> The Five Mindfulness trainings - <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

## The Third Gift : Worksheet

*"I will train myself not to cause suffering through sexual misconduct"*

**Write one or two examples for each category of betrayal :**

*The ways that I have betrayed others by my sexual misconduct through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have betrayed myself by my sexual misconduct through my thoughts, my words or my actions...*

*The ways that I have been betrayed by Other's sexual misconduct through their thoughts, their words or their actions...*

## The Fourth Gift : “I will train myself to speak truthfully, kindly, abstaining from gossip and slander.”

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

*"Furthermore, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth gift, the fourth great gift — original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmins".<sup>24</sup>*

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

*"Having entered a royal court or a company of people he should not speak lies. He should not speak lies (himself) nor incite others to do so. He should completely avoid falsehood."<sup>25</sup>*

An alternative translation <sup>26</sup>

*"In government assembly, or artisans' guild, or one to another, speak not what is false, not others compel, nor approve of their lies, all kinds of untruthfulness you should avoid."*

## Loving Speech and Deep Listening

**Thich Nhat Hanh** continues:

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.<sup>27</sup>*

<sup>24</sup> Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

<sup>25</sup> "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html>

<sup>26</sup> "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills <https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills>

<sup>27</sup> The Five Mindfulness trainings - <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>



## The Fourth Gift : Worksheet:

*"I will train myself to speak truthfully, kindly, abstaining from gossip and slander."*

**Write one or two examples for each category of abuse :**

*The ways that I have abused others by my speech through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander...*

*The ways that I have abused myself by my speech through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander...*

*The ways that I have been abused by Others speech through lies, harsh speech, gossip or slander...*

## The Fifth Gift : “I will train myself to refrain from intoxicants and intoxication.”

The **Rewards Sutta** continues:

*"Furthermore, **abandoning the use of intoxicants**, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift— original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning — that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmins".*<sup>28</sup>

The **Dhammika Sutta** - the advice to lay-people continues:

*"A layman who has chosen to practice this Dhamma should not indulge in the drinking of intoxicants. He should not drink them nor encourage others to do so; realising that it leads to madness. Through intoxication, foolish people perform evil deeds and cause other heedless people to do likewise. He should avoid intoxication, this occasion for demerit, which stupefies the mind, and is the pleasure of foolish people."*<sup>29</sup>

An alternative translation<sup>30</sup>

*Whatever householder this Dharma approves,  
in maddening drink should never indulge,  
nor make others drink, nor approve if they do,  
knowing it leads to a mind that's disturbed.*

*Fools do many evils because they are drunk,  
while causing other people to be negligent.  
This basis of demerit should be avoided,  
but fools are delighted, confused with mind upset.*

## Nourishment and Healing

**Thich Nhat Hanh** continues:

*Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid - "Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards" (AN 8.39)

<sup>29</sup> "Dhammika Sutta" (SNP 2.14), translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.2.14.irel.html>

<sup>30</sup> "To Dhammika: the Pure Hearkeners' Conduct" (SNP 2.14) translated from the Pali by Laurence Khantipalo Mills <https://suttacentral.net/snp2.14/en/mills>

<sup>31</sup> The Five Mindfulness trainings - <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

## The Fifth Gift : Worksheet

*"I will train myself to refrain from intoxicants and intoxication."*

**Write one or two examples for each category of abandonment:**

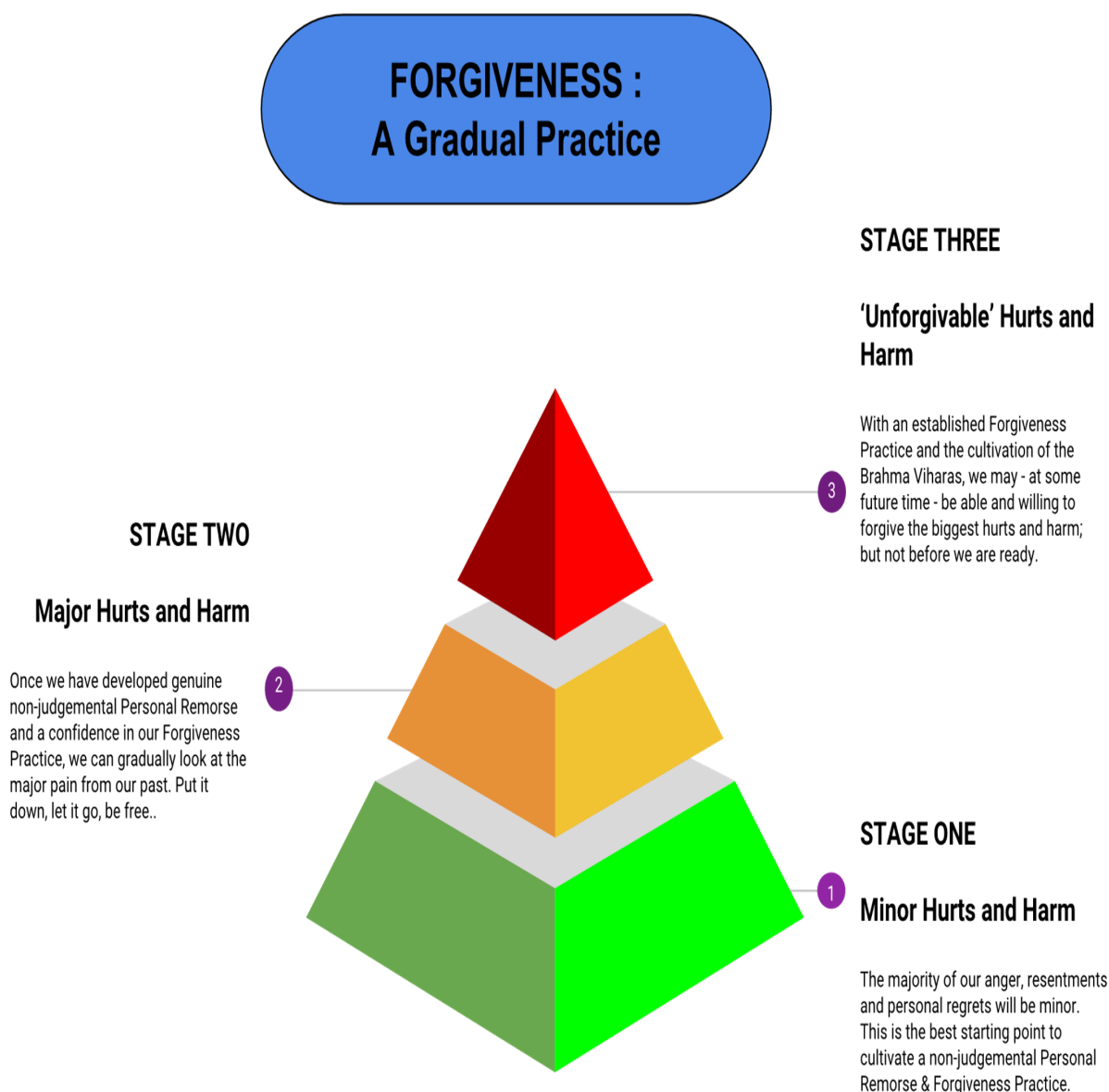
*The ways that I have abandoned others by my intoxication, addiction or compulsions...*

*The ways that I abandoned myself by my intoxication, addiction or compulsions...*

*The ways that I have been abandoned by Other's intoxication, addiction or compulsions...*

## Forgiveness Warning !!!

For some great pains you may not feel a release but only the burden and the anguish or anger that you still hold.



Touch this softly; touch this with loving-kindness. Be forgiving of yourself for not yet being ready to let go.<sup>32</sup> If we are not yet ready and able to forgive ourselves or others, we might set the noble aspiration (Sajja/Sacca) that one day, with practice, we intend to forgive everyone. In this way, we set the intention, but we let go of the expectation as to when, where or how that might happen.<sup>33</sup>

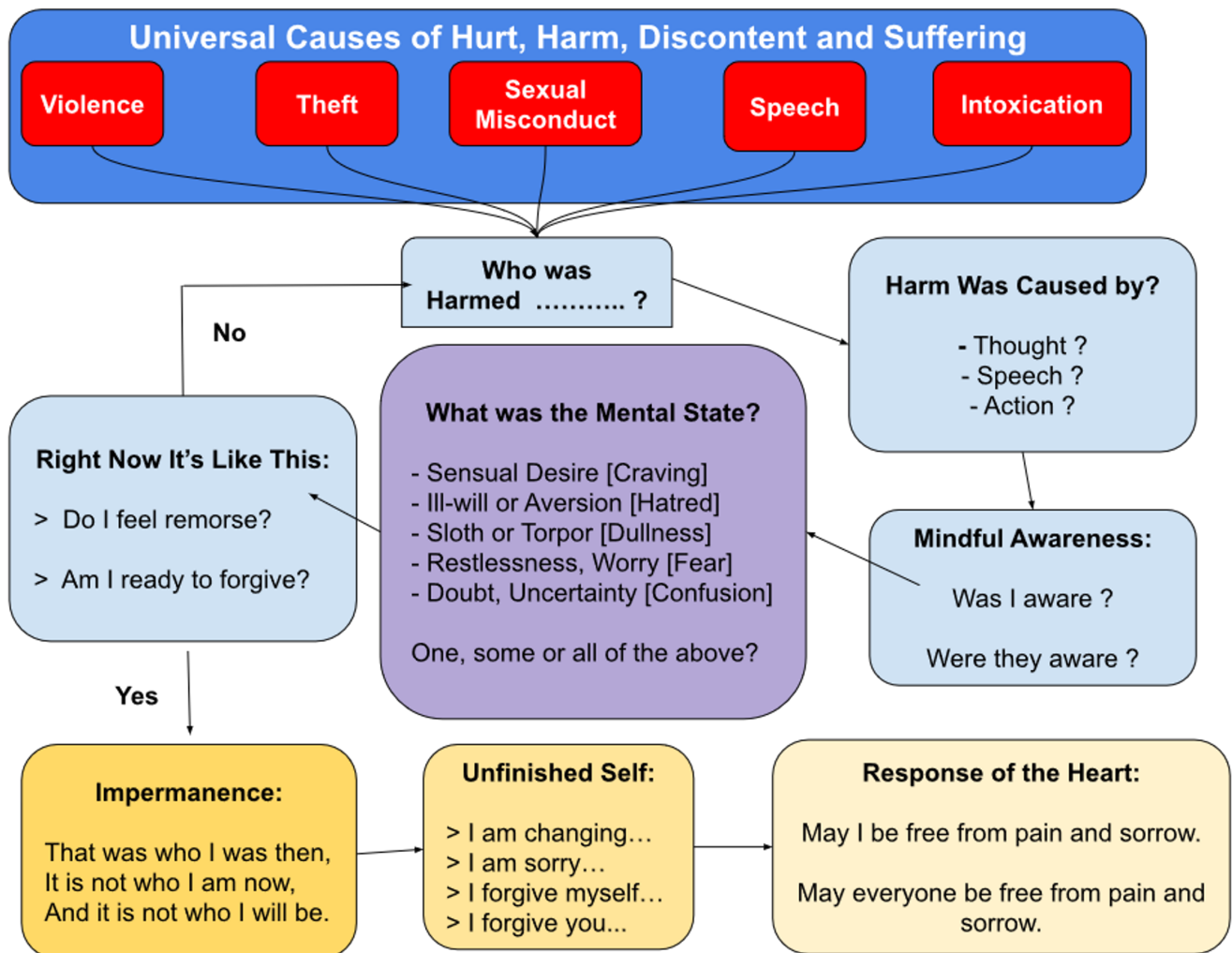
<sup>32</sup> Jack Kornfield – author of the book 'Path with Heart'

<sup>33</sup> Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - <http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/>

## Investigation and Insight into Personal Remorse and Forgiveness

This diagram depicts a possible course of an investigation into how and why personal hurt and harm arises. This deeper examination is not essential, but it may provide valuable insights into our own and other people's behaviours.

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## The Universal Precepts – A Personal Commitment to Harmlessness

If we decide to commit to living in harmony, as best we can, with the Universal Precepts then perhaps there will be fewer occasions that we might need to practice self-forgiveness.

- “I will set the intention not to harm myself or others [by my thoughts, by my words or] by my actions.”
- “I will set the intention not to take anything that has not been freely given.”
- “I will set the intention not to harm myself or others by my sexual [and sensual] misconduct.”
- “I will set the intention not to harm myself or others by false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander.”
- “I will set the intention to refrain from taking alcohol and/or other drugs that impair my mindfulness.”

<sup>34</sup> Based on and adapted from the free book ‘Forgiveness For Everyone’ by Jeff Oliver.

## The Cultivation of Personal Remorse & the Practice of Forgiveness

It is suggested that Remorse and Forgiveness are cultivated through the lens of one Universal Precept at a time.

### **Forgiveness – for violence**

For all of the ways that I have hurt you physically or emotionally ..... I am sorry.

For all of the ways that I have hurt myself physically or emotionally..... I forgive myself.

For all of the ways that you have hurt me physically or emotionally..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for stealing or taking what was not freely given**

For all of the ways that I have harmed you by taking what was not mine..... I am sorry.

For all of the ways that I have harmed myself by taking what was not mine..... I forgive myself.

For all of the ways that you have harmed me by taking what I did not freely give..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for sexual misconduct**

For all of the ways that I have betrayed you through my sensual misconduct..... I am sorry.

For all of the ways that I have betrayed myself through my sensual misconduct..... I forgive myself.

For all of the ways that you have betrayed me through your sensual misconduct..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for false speech or harsh words and thoughts**

For all of the ways that I have abused you through my harsh speech or lies..... I am sorry.

For all of the ways that I have abused myself through my harsh speech or lies..... I forgive myself.

For all of the ways that you have abused me through your harsh speech or lies..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for the suffering caused by intoxication**

For all of the ways that I have abandoned you through my intoxication or drug use..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have abandoned myself through my intoxication or drug use..... I forgive myself.

For all the ways that you have abandoned me through your intoxication or drug use..... I forgive you.

## An Embodied Posture

Whatever meditation posture you adopt for your practice, the most important aspect is your intention – as Gil Fronsdal suggests – your posture should represent your Heart’s desire to awaken... your Heart’s desire to move away from misery towards the end of misery without creating yet more suffering for ourselves... or causing more suffering for anyone else along the way.

## Part One : Forgiveness for the Harm we have caused Others

The first stage of our practice is to express remorse and forgive ourselves for the hurt or harm caused to others.

We might imagine that we are breathing in-out of Heart area...

We recite the following phrases like a silent whisper at the back of the mind...

I ask for forgiveness from others for whatever harmful things I have done:

the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.

(1) I now remember how I **hurt** you physically or emotionally.

--- I am sorry.

(2) I now remember how I **harmed** you by taking what you did not freely give [or by withholding that which I should have given to you].

--- I am sorry.

(3) I now remember how I **betrayed** you through my sexual misconduct.

--- I am sorry.

(4) I now remember how I **abused** you through my words, through my lies, through my angry, slanderous, gossiping speech.

--- I am sorry.

(5) I now remember how I **abandoned** you through my intoxication.

--- I am sorry.

Actions born out of my own pain; out of my fear; out of my hurt... out of my not knowing (ignorance).

But that was who I was then,

...not who I am now,

...and not who I will be in the future.

You have nothing to fear from me today,

For the thoughts, words and acts of pain, that I have inflicted upon you,

I am sorry,

I forgive myself.

For the harm, I have caused you, knowingly or unknowingly,

I am sorry,

I forgive myself.

For the sorrow, I have caused you,

I am sorry,

I forgive myself.<sup>35</sup>

Frequently checking in with our heart centre to note the feelings that we might find there

resistance, conflict, blockages, anger, hatred, surrender... maybe you will find relief and maybe some release?

*[What does it feel like to let go of the self-view of the **wrongdoer**?]*

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<sup>35</sup> Adapted from Christina Feldman's book – Compassion ~ Listening to the Cries of the World

## Part Two : Forgiveness for the Harm we have caused Ourselves

**The second direction of forgiveness is towards ourselves** for all of the hurt and harm that we have inflicted on ourselves... through our thoughts... through our words, spoken or not spoken... and through actions...

I ask for and I extend forgiveness to myself for whatever harmful things I have done to myself: the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.

- (1) I now remember how I **hurt** myself physically or emotionally.  
--- I forgive myself.
- (2) I now remember how I **harmed** myself stealing from others or by withholding that which I should have given to myself.  
--- I forgive myself.
- (3) I now remember how I **betrayed** myself through my sexual misconduct.  
--- I forgive myself.
- (4) I now remember how I **abused** myself through my words, through my lies, through my angry speech... through my words spoken and unspoken.  
--- I forgive myself.
- (5) I now remember how I **abandoned** myself through my intoxication, my addictions, my compulsions.  
--- I forgive myself.

Out of my own pain; out of my fear; out of my hurt; out of my anger... out of my not knowing.

But that was who I was then,  
...not who I am now,  
...and not who I will be in the future.

I now ask for... and extend to myself... full and heartfelt forgiveness,  
I forgive myself for not understanding,  
I forgive myself for the mistakes of the past.

For the thoughts, words and acts of pain that I have inflicted on myself,  
I offer myself forgiveness.  
For the harm that I have caused myself, knowingly or unknowingly,  
I offer myself forgiveness.  
For the sorrow that I have caused myself,  
I offer myself forgiveness.  
I wholeheartedly forgive myself,  
I forgive myself now.

Frequently checking in with our heart centre to note the feelings that we might find there -  
resistance, conflict, blockages, anger, hatred, surrender... maybe you will find relief and maybe some release?

*[Can you let go of the identity of being both the **perpetrator** and the **victim** of these hurts?]*



## Part Three : Forgiveness for the Harm caused by Others.

**The last direction forgiveness is towards those who have hurt or harmed us;** to those who have abused us; to those who have abandoned us...

Of course, there are some hurts that are just so large, we may feel that we can never forgive them. But it is suggested that we place these hurts on the backburner and not let them overwhelm our practice. The Buddha suggested that the path to liberation, the path to freedom is a gradual path...we should only take on that which we can work with... we only take on that which we can manage.

Those of us who have suffered the bigger wounds, the unforgivable hurts... and I would suggest that applies to every addict... we might simply set the intention, that one day - with this practice - with my Buddhist practice - I have an aspiration that I will be able to forgive that person - that event. But right now, right here I am not ready. So having set the intention... we can let go of the expectation of where or when or how that forgiveness may come.

We might start this stage of our forgiveness practice by just bringing forward into the present moment the small hurts... the small slights, the petty betrayals and minor abuses.

As far as I am ready and as far as I am able; I forgive others for whatever harmful things they have done: the mistakes, the failures and the wrong-doings committed intentionally or unintentionally with body, word and heart.

(1) I now remember how you **hurt** me physically or emotionally.

...I offer you my forgiveness.

(2) I now remember how you **harmed** me by taking that which I did not give or by your withholding that which you should have given to me.

...I offer you my forgiveness.

(3) I now remember how you **betrayed** me through your sexual misconduct.

...I offer you my forgiveness.

(4) I now remember how you **abused** me through your false speech; your angry words... through your gossip and slander.

...I offer you my forgiveness.

(5) I now remember how you **abandoned** me through your intoxication, through your addictions and through your compulsions.

...I offer you my forgiveness.

Actions born out of your pain; out of your fear; out your anger or simply out of your not knowing

I have carried the pain and sorrow of your actions in my heart for too long and now I put them down...

...now, I set you free,

...now, I release you.

You have nothing to fear from me.

For the thoughts, words and acts of pain that you have inflicted on me,

I offer you my forgiveness.

For the harm that you have caused me, knowingly or unknowingly,

I offer you my forgiveness.

For the sorrow that you have caused me,

I offer you my forgiveness.

I forgive you now.

*[Can you let go of the identity of being a **victim** of these hurts? What purpose does this self-view serve?]*

## Impermanence & Forgiveness

*You might **remember-to-remember** just how far it is that you have come,  
and not just how far it is that you might imagine that you have to go.*

*So you might not be where you think that you want to be,  
but neither are you where you used to be!<sup>36</sup>*

~~~~~

*That was who I was yesterday,  
It is not who I am today,  
And, not who I will be tomorrow.<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Paraphrased from a quote by Rick Warren ([www.goodreads.com/author/show/711.Rick\\_Warren](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/711.Rick_Warren))

<sup>37</sup> Paraphrased from the free book 'Forgiveness for Everyone' by Jeff Oliver  
(<http://sjba.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/FORGIVENESS-FOR-EVERYONE.pdf>)