



Dr. Dick Tibbits
with Steve Halliday, PhD

FORGIVE
TO LIVE

PART ONE



MY LIFE
IS YOUR FAULT
THE BLAME GAME



Forgive to Live® Workbook

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Outline

MAKE THE CHOICE. SAVE YOUR LIFE.

HOLDING ON TO ANGER IS LIKE SWALLOWING A POISON PILL...

...and hoping the other person dies! It's a deadly dilemma. But now, there's a solution.

Every one of us has a grievance story — a hurtful event perpetrated by someone who mattered in our lives. And for most of us, the never-ending hurt leaves us feeling discouraged and unhappy. While we've been taught we should forgive, we've never been shown why or how to forgive. But in his acclaimed series 'Forgive to Live', Dr. Dick Tibbits demonstrates how forgiveness can literally save your life.

Dr. Tibbits' groundbreaking research revealed that a failure or inability to forgive creates an inner anger disturbing our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. And that anger kills through an array of ailments such as depression, stress, broken relationships, and heart disease. But his work also revealed a solution: forgiveness. And this interactive guide will show you how to forgive — insight by insight, step by step.

This series takes you through a 6-part forgiveness program that is easy to understand and follow. It can be used as a self-study guide or in group discussion where you benefit from shared experiences and the motivation of group support.

THIS SERIES WILL HELP YOU LEARN:

1. The steps along the path of the forgiveness journey — and where you are in that journey
2. How to find the freedom that comes through forgiveness
3. How to improve your future and your health through the choices you make today
4. How to reframe your past and find increased hope
5. How anger can work for you and pave the way for forgiveness
6. How to forgive yourself and become free of guilt and shame

Congratulations on taking the first step in your forgiveness journey - a journey that will change your life forever.

Introduction

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES

For over a decade I have been conducting “Forgive to Live” seminars across the country and around the world, teaching participants how to forgive as a way to improve their physical, mental, and spiritual health.

My book “Forgive to Live” grew out of a scientific study I conducted at Florida Hospital in conjunction with Stanford University, which demonstrated that by practicing forgiveness, individuals could lower their blood pressure and reduce their anger.

In this six-part series, I will present the core content of my book and the seminars I conduct so that you can experience for yourself the powerful benefits of forgiveness.

This series will cover the topics in greater detail to enhance your learning experience, and the accompanying workbook will provide opportunities to reflect and engage with this material, so that you can apply what you have learnt in a practical way as you begin your journey toward forgiveness.

Each topic is divided into four sections:

Q CASE STUDY

To introduce each topic, I begin with a case study, based on the experiences of a real person.

💡 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In this section you’ll find core information about an aspect of forgiveness designed to enhance your understanding. This section will prepare you to do the exercises and respond to the questions that follow.

♥ TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Here I present relevant exercises for you to complete and questions for you to answer, along with specific steps you can take in order to enjoy the amazing benefits of forgiveness.

✍ REVIEWING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

In this section I ask you to apply what you’ve learned in each topic to the story you just read. By helping the person from the case study, you will gain insights that can help you as well.

*Forgiveness is more than simply saying the words
“I forgive you.”*

You can use this workbook on your own, or you can participate with others so you can benefit from multiple experiences and the motivation that comes with group support. My goal is to help you get moving on your personal journey toward forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not always easy; you may resist at first. You may feel tempted to believe that what someone did to you was so bad that it does not deserve forgiveness. Forgiveness may feel difficult because you see the other person as so bad that you want nothing to do with him or her. Whenever you feel the urge to resist forgiveness, never forget that the failure to forgive will always result in punishing yourself more severely than the other person. You deserve a better life! And forgiveness will get you there.

You will succeed in your ability to forgive when you practice daily the techniques of forgiveness described in this series. Forgiveness is more than simply saying the words “I forgive you.” While making the decision to forgive is the right place to start, forgiveness is much more than that. Forgiveness is a process of dealing with past hurts, current disappointments, and future possibilities. It means letting go of those things that bring no value to your life. Take the time to deal with your hurts from the past so you will no longer have to live with them in the present. Today is the day to begin your forgiveness journey. Make the choice to forgive and change your life forever!

I wish you all the best as you travel the path of forgiveness toward the bright tomorrow it offers you.

- Dr Dick Tibbits

Foundation

TEN PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness begins when you ...

1. Accept that life is not fair and that others may play by a different set of rules than you do.
2. Stop blaming others for your circumstances.
3. Understand that you cannot change the person who hurt you; you can change only yourself.
4. Acknowledge the anger and hurt that some unpleasant event is causing you.
5. Re-frame your story of hurt—your “grievance story”—by placing the hurtful events in a broader context than your current point of view.
6. Recognise that only you can make the choice to forgive.
7. Shift your view of the offender as the one with all the power to seeing that person as weak and acting out of their own unresolved hurts and struggles.
8. Intentionally move from victim to victor as you begin to tap into your inner strengths and abilities.
9. Understand that forgiveness will take time and cannot be rushed.
10. Take responsibility for your life and your future.

If you want to live, at some point you must choose to forgive.



MY LIFE IS YOUR FAULT

The blame game



— CASE STUDY —

Q *Robert's Story*

Robert worked tirelessly for his company. Whenever a project needed to get finished, he would stay on task until it was completed—always ahead of schedule. He consistently received stellar performance evaluations. So, as his supervisor's retirement drew near, Robert knew he would be first in line for the job. Or so he thought.

But Robert's supervisor wanted a friend of his to take his position when he retired, so he gave that person opportunities on the job that he withheld from Robert. This upset Robert and he exchanged words with his supervisor. As a result, Robert got placed on probation. Since company policy did not allow anyone to be promoted while on probation, Robert got passed over for the leadership position when the supervisor retired. Through no fault of his own, Robert missed out on the promotion, which went to the supervisor's friend who had less experience than Robert.

Robert's anger over the unfair incident soon began to take over his life. He resented his job and especially his new supervisor. Rather than working hard, Robert hardly worked. To bury his rage, Robert also started to drink heavily. As a result, he frequently missed work, something that had never happened before. Because of his absenteeism and poor work productivity, Robert got fired—and he blamed his former supervisor for his dismissal.

Rather than looking for another job, Robert sits home every day, angry that life can be so unfair. A year later, Robert's life is in ruins. He still blames his former supervisor for all his problems.



💡 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

*It's very hard to assure equality...
Some men are killed in war,
others are wounded, and some
never leave the country.*
– John F. Kennedy

We want to believe that life is fair. If, like Robert, we work hard, do our best each day, and achieve great results for the company, we should get the promotion we deserve.

But what happens when that promotion doesn't come? What happens when life turns out to be not so fair after all?

How can we best respond to the hurtful things that happen to us?



When bad things happen in our lives, most of us respond in predictable ways:

- We try to get an apology and then feel additional hurt when the other person doesn't respond in helpful ways.
- We then tell others of the injustice, hoping they can change the circumstances or at least empathise us.
- Over time, our hurt turns into anger and then into resentment toward the other person.
- We start to fantasise about revenge, even though it is unlikely we will ever follow through with our plan.
- We withdraw from the person who hurt us and maybe even from life in general, all the time blaming the other person for our current circumstances.

When life doesn't treat you fairly, will you blame others or will you forgive?

Blame says:

- What happened is your fault.
- Therefore, the misery in my life is your fault.
- In short, my life is your fault.

The problem is that blame doesn't work. Like an addiction, it makes you feel better at first, but in the long run it destroys your life.

When you blame someone, you are in fact giving them control over your life, or at least over your emotional life. But at some point, the issue is no longer what the other person did to you but what you are doing to yourself by holding on to the incident for as long as you have.

Forgiveness is giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me, so my hurt can come to an end.

Holding people accountable for their actions is not the same as blaming them for how you feel.

To stop the blame, you need to put yourself back in charge of your life and not give control to the one who already has demonstrated he or she does not care about your happiness. Blame prevents you from taking responsibility for your current circumstances (of course, you are not responsible for the original hurtful act done to you). If your life feels miserable, it is your responsibility to do something about it.

Here is the reality: blame cannot *solve* problems. At best, it merely points the finger at someone else. And when you point your finger at someone else, the only possible solution to your problem is for that person to do something for you.

Blame maintains that, until that person changes, you can do nothing—and such a line of reasoning breeds helplessness. Blame is a passive response because it expects the other person to act. Do you really believe the other person will care enough to want to make your life better? How has that worked for you? It's not a great strategy for success.

Keep in mind that others act as they do because of their circumstances and how they have learned to cope with life. Their actions toward you have more to do with who they are than with what you have done. You will need to change your view of the other person as the all-powerful one over your life, and rather see this individual for who he or she really is: a person who acted poorly.



Empathy allows you to detach from your own concerns and take the perspective of the other person's struggles, which allows you to take less personally their actions toward you. You need to see clearly that what occurred is the other person's issue. Not taking things so personally may even allow you to feel some compassion toward others and their life circumstances. If you were abused by someone, for example, chances are your abuser was also abused.

That doesn't make their action toward you justified, of course, but it may explain their weakness. And while you may wish that they would have been strong enough to break the cycle of abuse, it may be that you will need

to demonstrate the strength they failed to exercise by determining to break the cycle yourself.

It gets worse when you take the offence too personally. Rather than interpreting what the other person did as simply characteristic of that individual's personality, you interpret the behaviour as occurring because of something you have done. Keep in mind that people act as they do because of who they are. Usually the other person would have acted the same way, no matter who was there or what was done.

Finally, we tend to put more focus on the supposed intent of the other person— what motivated someone's actions—than on the impact the individual's actions had on us. This is critically important, because when I focus on motive, I will see someone who has harmed me only as an evil person with bad intentions. Why else would someone have done such a bad thing? But by doing this, I only add to my misery. We can never fully understand the motives of another person; often we do not even know our own motives.





When you blame, you see the world in “all or nothing” terms, and thus you see the other person as all bad. You have heard the expression: *“Love is blind.”* What does that mean? It means when you are in love, you see only the good points in the other person. You overlook the faults. Well, anger is equally as blind.

When you feel upset with someone, you see only their bad points. And if you feel upset enough, you will see nothing good in that person at all. Put simply, when you like someone, you tend to focus on that person’s good points, and when you do not like someone, you tend to focus on the bad characteristics. Your best friend can become your worst enemy simply by what you choose to focus on. In fact, many times that is exactly what happens. And here is the paradox: your worst enemy is someone else’s best friend. Go figure!

The truth is that we are all a mixture of good and bad. This world will always have some bad, of course, but if you allow that unpleasant fact to paralyse you, then you will spend the rest of your life immobilised, unable to deal with painful situations.



When you point your finger of blame at someone else, remember there are four fingers pointing back at you.

Blame's only conclusion is that my life is your fault.



Don't waste your energy trying to understand why the other person did what he or she did. It is far better to share with the other person how his or her actions affected you. Explain in concise language what you expect and how that contrasts with what occurred. If the person cares about you, he or she will either correct the hurtful actions, or through mutual dialogue, you will come up with an alternative approach that will work for both of you. If the other person does not care about you, he or she will have no interest in correcting hurtful actions to meet your needs.

Another effective way to break the cycle of disappointment over another's actions toward you is to lower your expectations. The less you expect of someone, the less you feel disappointed when the person does something, or fails to do something, toward you.

Learning to accept the following three truths will help you to lower your expectations:

1. People make mistakes.
2. People will do what they want to do.
3. People do not have to do what I want them to do.



When life isn't fair, we are left with two choices: to blame or to forgive.

Forgiveness asserts that an offence that has spoiled your past will not ruin your present or destroy your future. When you feel as though you are the only one going through a terrible ordeal, it can help to give thanks that you are not going through something even worse. Look around; you can always find someone who is suffering more than you. Be thankful that no matter what problems you face, they could be worse.

When a harmful act has been committed against you, how do you typically respond?

- Blame the person who has harmed you?
- Determine to get even with the person who has harmed you?
- Try to ignore the person who has harmed you?
- Forgive the person who has harmed you?

How you respond is your choice... a choice that will make all the difference in your life. Forgiveness is always the better option for healing your life!

**ARE YOU READY TO FORGIVE
SO YOU CAN LIVE LIFE TO ITS
FULLEST?**



REVIEWING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Let's take a moment to review Robert's story. All of us think life should be fair, but we have to realise that fairness is often in the eyes of the beholder. Consider Robert's case. What Robert experienced as an injustice, his boss saw as an opportunity to help a friend. So what was clearly detrimental to Robert and unfair to him was not all bad from another perspective.

What do you think Robert might have done had the roles been reversed, if he had been in his boss's place? Although nothing can excuse the actions of Robert's boss, the answer to this question could free Robert from giving up and believing that he will never have a chance at another promotion.

Robert will need to take responsibility for his current thoughts and actions. Robert has the right, for instance, to pursue his concerns either with his boss's boss or through employee relations to be sure that no labour laws were violated. He gains nothing, however, by blaming others for his current life. Specifically, he needs to realise that his angry response all but assures that he will not be promoted in the future at some other job—and, without question, that will not be his former boss's doing.

Now answer a few questions:

1. What would you recommend that Robert do to stop his suffering?

2. Who is Robert trying to punish by his actions and who is he really punishing? Is he accomplishing his goal?

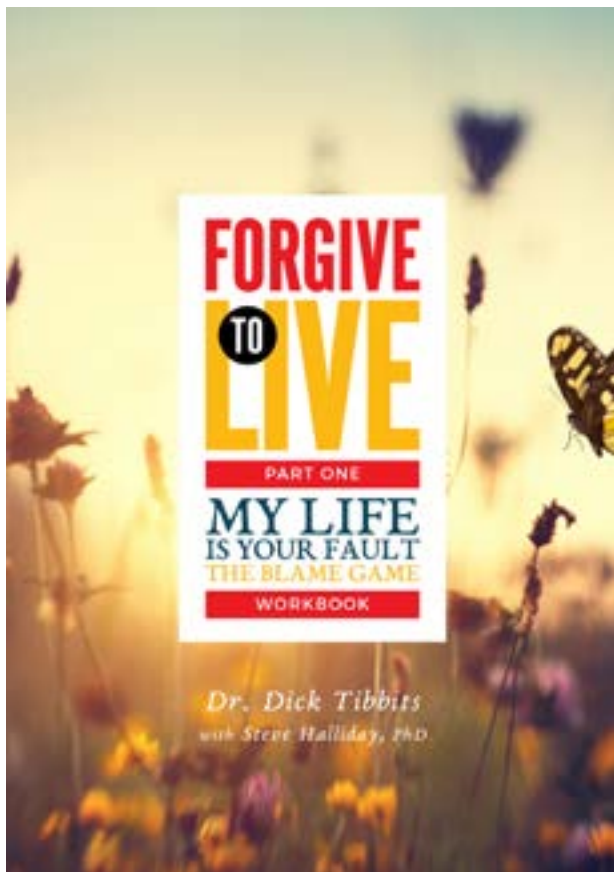
3. Robert is spending more time feeling angry with his former boss than planning how he could grow his career. What can he do to get back on track?

4. Has Robert's anger at his boss changed anything? Is Robert's anger likely to change anything in the future?

5. Can Robert forgive and still seek legal action for any possible labour law violation? Why or why not?

Thanks for completing these Review questions in Part 1 of the Forgive to Live booklet.

If you would like to share your Review answers with one of our Hope Channel Community Managers and/or continue your forgiveness journey by receiving Part 2 in the Forgive to Live series, please email discover@hopechannel.com or call 1300 300 389.



FURTHER REFLECTION

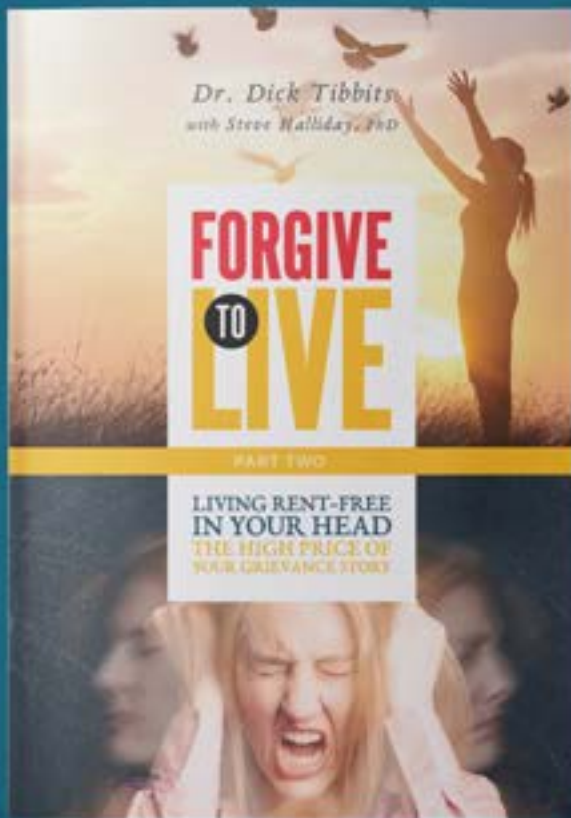
Throughout this topic, you've had the opportunity to reflect on a specific case study and consider the role that forgiveness can play in freeing us from blame.

It may seem simple when we look at someone else's story - when we're not the ones dealing with the emotional hurt and disappointment.

Perhaps as you read Robert's story, it brought to your mind an experience you have had in the past - a circumstance for which you blame someone else, and find it hard to move past.

Through the accompanying workbook, you will now have the chance to take what you've just read and apply it to your own story so that you can experience the real difference forgiveness can make in your own life.

The workbook is for your own personal use - and we encourage you to use it in order to get the most benefit from this series.



PART 2: LIVING RENT-FREE IN YOUR HEAD

Our lives are largely the result of stories we tell ourselves. The test of genuine forgiveness is not whether you remember a hurtful event, but how you remember it. Learn how to take charge of your own story to experience freedom for the future in Part 2 of the Forgive to Live series. Email or call Hope Channel to receive your copy and to continue in your forgiveness journey.



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